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Soldiers

The Official U.S. Army Magazine



START STRONG • SERVE STRONG

REINTEGRATE STRONG • REMAIN STRONG



SOLDIER FOR LIFE

Soldiers

Magazine



SOLDIER FOR LIFE



ON THE COVER

Soldier for Life: Start Strong, Serve Strong, Reintegrate Strong and Remain Strong. (Cover illustration by Peggy Frierson)

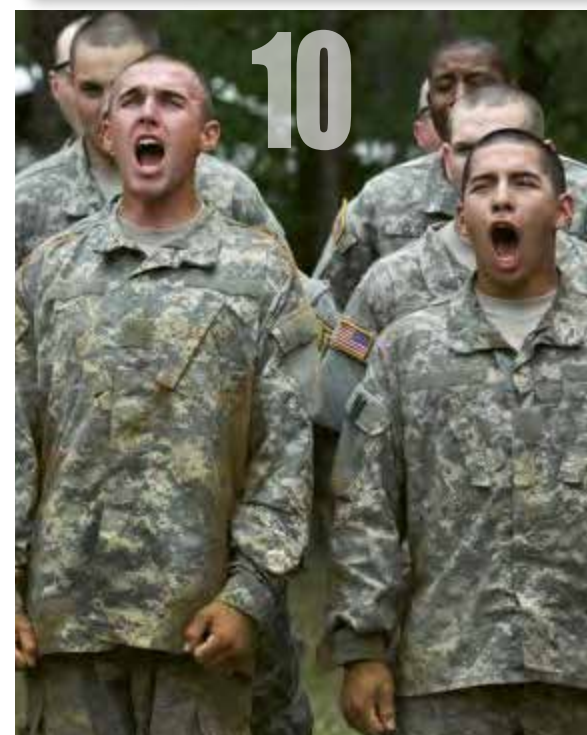
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U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond T. Odierno laughs with Army cadets at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia, April 14, 2014. Odierno was attending the George C. Marshall ROTC Award Seminar, where he addressed Army ROTC winners, seminar guests and VMI leaders. Programs like ROTC help future Soldiers start strong military careers. (Photo by Sgt. Mikki L. Sprenkle)



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(7) (From left) Travis Davis and Jerome Smith, who work for the Fort Hood Directorate of Logistics, stand in the main warehouse at the Fort Hood, Texas, rail operations station. All three men are U.S. Army veterans who chose to make Killeen, Texas, their home after retiring from active duty. (Photo by Sgt. Ken Scar)

(8) Triplets John Paul, Jacob Erik and Joshua Clint Temple take the oath of enlistment at the Little Rock Military Entrance Processing Station. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney)

(10) Recruits in basic training sound off after running an obstacle course at Ft. Benning, Georgia. (Photo by Glenn Fawcett)

(12) Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps Cadet Deniece Tukuafu from the University of Hawaii successfully navigates the "Weaver" obstacle during the confidence training course at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington. The Army cadets navigated the confidence and obstacle course and repel tower during their Leadership Development and Assessment Course, also known as Warrior Forge, where the junior and senior cadets travel from all over the country in their journey to being commissioned as second lieutenants in the United States Army. (Photo by Spc. Ryan Hallock)

U.S. ARMY

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Soldiers

The Official U.S. Army Magazine

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NAGC Blue Pencil
Competition
2004



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2009
Elizabeth M. Collins



U.S. Army Soldier for Life Program

Start Strong...Serve Strong...Reintegrate Strong...Remain Strong

As America emerges from the longest conflict in its history, one million Soldiers will transition from the U.S. Army to civilian life over the next ten years. These Soldiers, who answered the Nation's call and upheld the proud traditions of our Army, will return to society with valuable skills and experiences that will enable them to enrich their communities, benefit their employers and inspire our youth. These men and women are Soldiers for Life.

The Soldier for Life program is the Army's holistic approach to ensuring that Soldiers have the tools, support and networks they need to fulfill their remarkable potential. The mission of the Soldier for Life program is to ensure that every Soldier, Army Veteran and Retired Soldier — whether he or she served in the Active Army, National Guard or Army Reserve — is prepared to successfully transition to civilian life. The Army will match the dedication and loyalty of our Soldiers for Life by providing them and their Families with the resources they need to seek employment, education and health opportunities.

In every community in America, our Soldiers for Life will continue to contribute to the well-being of the Nation. These Soldiers for Life will be ambassadors for the Army, providing an example and inspiration to America's youth that will help ensure our Army remains the world's premier All-Volunteer Force. Armed with valuable skills and knowledge gained during their service, these Soldiers and Families will be successful in the next phase of their life, confirming that the support and appreciation of the Army lasts a lifetime. Most importantly, they will know that they are lifelong members of the Army Family. Find out more at www.soldierforlife.army.mil.

Once a Soldier, Always a Soldier . . . A Soldier for Life!

Raymond F. Chandler III
Sergeant Major of the Army

Raymond T. Odierno
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

John M. McHugh
Secretary of the Army



Soldier for Life:

Ensuring strength throughout a Soldier's career

Story by Jacqueline M. Hames

SOLDIERS are returning home en masse with the drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some will stay in the Army and progress in their chosen career fields while others may switch to the Guard and Reserves, or leave military life through separation or retirement, a transition that is daunting, to say the least.

The Army has been working to ease the changeover into civilian life with a new program that helps the Soldier plan ahead for his whole career: Soldier for

Life. The program connects the Army, government and community efforts to help Soldiers and their families successfully reintegrate into civilian life, keeping them Army Strong even though they may leave the service.

“The Soldier for Life program is designed to help Soldiers receive opportunities for employment and education as they transition out of the military service,” Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno said. “We want Soldiers to use

the traits they developed in the military — leadership, dedication, selfless service and commitment — translate them into lifelong success as they continue to serve in their surrounding communities.”

Colonel Adam Rocke, the director of the SFL, is passionate about the program, which centers on a holistic approach called the Soldier lifecycle. The lifecycle has four phases — Start Strong, Serve Strong, Reintegrate Strong, and Remain Strong — that build Soldiers’ skills throughout their ser-

“We have a sacred duty to prepare young men and women before we send them into harm’s way in defense of our nation. We owe that same type of commitment to preparing our men and women - our Soldiers - for their transition to civilian life.” -- Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh



▲ Twenty-five Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 4th Field Artillery Regiment perform the oath of enlistment, Oct. 31, 2013, in a mass re-enlistment ceremony at the Army Field Artillery Museum at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. (Photo by Capt. Charlie Dietz)

◀ U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Raymond Odierno, laughs with Army Cadets at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia, April 14, 2014. Odierno was attending the George C. Marshall Army ROTC Award Seminar where he addressed Army ROTC winners, seminar VIP guests and leaders of VMI. Programs like ROTC help future Soldiers start strong military careers. (Photo by Sgt. Mikki L. Sprenkle)

vice, making transition easier. When Soldiers and their families leave the service, they leave career ready, transitioning into a network of people and organizations that will connect them to employment, education and health care — Soldier for Life’s three pillars of successful reintegration.

“We talk about this theme we have, once a Soldier, always a Soldier for life. We think that’s the holistic approach for those four phases, ending with remaining strong, which helps in the long run to get the chief of staff of the Army’s strategic imperative, which is to sustain the all-volunteer Army,” Rocke said.

Starting and serving strong

“When an individual enlists in the U.S. Army, he becomes a member of an elite organization,” Odierno said. “We develop Soldiers who are selfless, disciplined, innovative, reliable, and who can demonstrate uncommon leadership under pressure.”

The Army recruits from the top 23 percent of Americans, and then only takes



in a small percentage of that number, Sgt. Maj. Shane Chapman, Rocke’s second in command, explained.

“(We) send them to basic training, send them to job training to get Army values, to get warrior ethos,” Chapman added. “So we start with the best, and make them better.”

This initial inculcation is paramount to a Soldier’s success, Rocke said. The



Transitioning

Transitioning from military to civilian life can be a daunting task. Often, Soldiers don’t know where to start to find the information they need. The Soldier for Life program hopes to help with that, compiling extensive resources on their website at www.soldierforlife.army.mil. This site incorporates resources for active, Guard and Reserve Soldiers, as well as retirees and families. Some of the resources listed include:

- ❑ Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program, <https://www.acap.army.mil>
- ❑ Army OneSource, www.myarmyonesource.com
- ❑ Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness, <http://csf2.army.mil>
- ❑ Hero to Hired, www.h2h.jobs
- ❑ Department of Veterans Affairs, www.va.gov
- ❑ Credentialing Opportunities Online, www.cool.army.mil
- ❑ Joint Service Transcript, <https://jst.doded.mil>



Spc. Phillip Kimbel is congratulated by Brig. Gen. Scottie Carpenter, commander of the 311th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), after receiving an associate degree in general curriculum from Dr. Allan Berg, senior vice president and overseas director of University of Maryland University College. Kimbel was among 55 service members and civilians from throughout Regional Command-South to receive degrees from among 14 colleges in a graduation ceremony at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, May 28, 2013. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes)

second phase, Serve Strong, is where a service member receives an occupational specialty. “You’re sponsored and mentored at your unit, you feel part of the team at that point in time,” he explained.

The team at SFL sees the eventual transition into civilian society as a long term or career term endeavor, Chapman explained. “That means that from the time you get to your first duty station you have to start thinking and planning about transition, because whether we want to admit it or not, we’re all getting out of the Army,” he said. “We have to plan for everything we do in the Army, we have to plan for transition out of the Army.”

To plan for that inevitable change, the Army is enhancing its professional

military education within the noncommissioned officer and officer education systems. Then, using the Army career tracker to help get the word out, SFL will leverage other programs like Credentialing Opportunities Online (www.cool.army.mil) and Joint Service Transcript (<https://jst.doded.mil>), to help Soldiers plan for college and other educational opportunities, Chapman explained.

The American Council of Education recommends college credit courses based on Army service and course work on the JST website, which gives servicemen and woman an opportunity to get certain courses waived when entering college. The COOL program allows Soldiers to further their education outside of col-

lege or the Army through licensures and certificates in specific skill-sets. Forty-three military occupational specialties can now earn one of 96 credentials on the COOL site.

“And that’s important, because industry is coming back to us and saying yes, education is important. Four-year degrees are great, but what we really lack is that skilled labor force. We really need people with the credentials or the skill training, the licensures, certificates, we need those people in our workforce,” Chapman said.

Soldier for Life hopes to offer an apprenticeship program in the future at no cost to the Army as well, allowing Soldiers to learn or enhance a skill 180 days prior to leaving the service.

Reintegrate and remain strong

The third phase of SFL, Reintegrate Strong, is when a Soldier prepares to leave the military. The Army Career and Alumni Program, now known as the Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program, was revamped in 2012, Chapman said, adding three focus points to the program — employment, education and entrepreneur — that will help Soldiers figure out what they want to do after they leave the military.

Soldier for Life TAP provides transition and job assistance services for major installations, helping servicemen and women prepare for civilian life, often before they leave the service, according to <https://www.acap.army.mil>. The program also connects Soldiers to alumni who can aid in the transition process.

“We have a large population of Army alumni and whether that’s our retirees, which is over 900,000 or our almost ... 10 million Army veterans in the country, those are our people, those are our network, those are our brothers and sisters,” Chapman said. “We have a lot of them that have stepped forward and mentor these young Soldiers coming out — sometimes old Soldiers, sometimes sergeants major and colonels need mentoring, too. So, they mentor us because they have already done that transition, and then transition is not the easiest to do.”

Once Soldiers have settled in to their civilian lives, they begin the last phase of the SFL program, Remain Strong. This phase is where Army alumni become the mentors for current active, Guard or Reserve Soldiers, those who have recently separated or retired, and future recruits by recommending service to the next generation, Chapman explained.

“(Soldiers) don’t just show up one day like ‘Oh, I think I’ll just join the Army because I’m bored.’ It was because someone, somewhere in their lives has given them that positive image of the Army,” he said.

Mentoring can be achieved in several different ways, Rocke said, through individual effort or through corporate sponsorship. The SFL program assists in connecting organizations with former and transitioning Soldiers. One way to connect Soldiers with corporate communities is through the Army’s Partnership for Youth Success



Travis Davis and Jerome Smith, who work for the Fort Hood Directorate of Logistics, stand in the main warehouse at the Fort Hood, Texas, rail operations station. Both men are U.S. Army veterans who chose to make Killeen, Texas, their home after retiring from active duty. (Photo by Sgt. Ken Scar)

program (www.armypays.com).

Rocke said there are over 500 employers signed up to be mentors with the PaYS program, with the intent of mentoring initial entry Soldiers. “That mentorship carries them through their service, whether it’s short term or long term, with a guaranteed job opportunity at the end — at least an interview — at the completion,” he said.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters has created a commercial driver’s license program to assist transitioning service members as well, Rocke said, which is a variety of apprenticeship program. Other companies, like Wal-Mart, have created job coalitions and pledged to hire a certain number of veterans, Chapman explained.

“The American people recognize the unique commitment that Soldiers make when they raise their hand and volunteer to defend the nation,” Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond Chandler, said. “They respect that selfless service, that courage and the leadership examples they dem-

onstrate to the nation. ... The American people are eager to support that willingness to serve and also to integrate them back into their civilian communities and businesses.

“The Soldier for Life program creates tools to support that altruism,” he added.

The goal of the SFL program is to provide as many resources as possible to Soldiers, so the individual can decide what is best for him, Rocke said.

“We want to make sure these servicemen and women who have served so proudly for us are taken care of and that they land softly in the civilian community so that when they get out there, we work to provide opportunities for them right now, so that (the Soldiers) and their families can have a second career,” he said.

“Honoring the service of our men and women remains a priority for the Army and it is imperative that we provide the proper tools to assist them with this transition,” Odierno added. **SM**

Start Strong:

Every Army career starts with TRADOC



“My commitment to the American Soldier is this: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command will harness the full might of our innovation, the talent of our recruiters, drill sergeants and instructors, and our world-class schools to start your career off strong and to maximize your potential as a professional Soldier.” — *Gen. David G. Perkins, TRADOC commanding general*

Staff Sgt. Roger L. Whaley speaks with Phillip McDonald about the possibility of becoming a journalist or X-ray technician for the Army at the U.S. Army Recruiting Station in Radcliff, Kentucky. Leads obtained by the Cyber Recruiting Center are often followed up by recruiters after qualifying information about the potential Soldier has been submitted. (Photo by Sgt. Carl N. Hudson)



Story by U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command

“**S**TARTING strong is the Army’s way of selecting and providing initial training and education for the 1 percent of the American population who will serve.

Through U.S. Army Recruiting Command, the U.S. Army Center for Initial Military Training and U.S. Army Cadet Command, TRADOC serves as the foundation for the Start Strong phase of every Soldier’s career. TRADOC transforms civilians into Soldiers and provides them the pathway into the profession of Soldiers, past and present. For more than 40 years, TRADOC has provided millions of Soldiers not only with the skills to become professionals in their field, but also the expertise and experience to successfully transition out of the Army upon completion of service.

Starting strong is critical to the individual success of Soldiers and fundamental to the Army’s role in defending the nation.

Finding the 1 percent

Finding only the best, brightest and most qualified young men and women

to serve in the U.S. Army is a challenging mission, but it’s one that recruiters assigned to U.S. Army Recruiting Command execute with passion.

Master Sgt. Steve McCartney, USAREC senior policy noncommissioned officer, who’s worked in recruiting in some capacity since 1996, said USAREC has some tough competition.

“We’re trying to recruit the same students that all the colleges and universities are trying to recruit. In addition to being physically fit, we want those individuals who have clean police records, don’t do drugs, make good grades and are leaders who are involved in community and student organizations, because young people who are assets to their community will be assets to the Army.”

The Army is well known for its success in mentoring young people to become responsible adults. This mentoring process, a critical element of the Army profession, begins once the future Soldier signs on the dotted line.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Crane, 1st Recruiting Brigade, said some future Soldiers need help with physical training, leadership development or in simply negotiating

◀ Sgt. Wesley Sams talks with Joseph and Kyle Rybarczyk during a future Soldier function at the Palatine Recruiting Station in Illinois. (Photo by Michael Scheck)

a challenging final year of high school. Others need help socially or spiritually - they may come from broken or volatile homes, where walking through the front door is the greatest challenge of each day. They turn to their recruiter, who mentors them just like they would any Soldier.

“The Army asks ordinary people to do extraordinary things. The ability to overcome adversity and challenges is a key part to making that possible for future Soldiers,” Crane said. “Recruiters have the immense responsibility of getting future Soldiers ready to be Soldiers physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. We’re really the first step in building the resilience of a Soldier.”

Recruiters also help set up future Soldiers for success by guiding them through the formal Future Soldier Training Program, or FSTP, which all recruits are required to complete.

This program includes the Basic Training Task List — tasks critical to success in an individual’s transition into the Army and completion of initial military training.

The BTTL includes Army values and history, customs and courtesies, rank rec-

ognition, basic first-aid and land navigation skills, the use of military time, basic communication skills, and the memorization of the phonetic alphabet and general orders.

Future Soldiers are also required to complete monthly diagnostic Army physical fitness tests. To prepare, recruiters familiarize them with physical training, which will condition their bodies for the rigors of Basic Combat Training. Just as in operational Army units, the physical training sessions develop and foster camaraderie and teamwork.

The FSTP also helps shape future Soldier values through training and education programs such as Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention and equal opportunity awareness.

Recruiters are also well versed in talent management, or matching the talent and desires of future Soldiers with the right military occupational specialties, said McCartney.

“I always told young men and women to pick a job based on their wants, needs and desires, and most importantly, one that fits their personality,” said McCartney.



Sgt. Wesley Sams holds close-order-drills with future Soldiers at the Palatine Recruiting Station in Illinois. (Photo by Michael Scheck)

“I’d ask them to think about what they’d really like to be doing five years down the road and then work with them to develop a plan to help them achieve that goal.”

Once future Soldiers raise their right hands and depart for basic training, they are no longer the recruiter’s responsibility, but the relationship between recruiter and



▲ An Army cadet tosses an empty 55-gallon drum to another cadet during the leader reaction course at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. (Photo by Mike Strasser)



▲ Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Dailey, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command’s senior enlisted adviser, addresses future Soldiers following an oath of enlistment ceremony, June 14, 2013, at Independence Hall, Philadelphia. Dailey participated in activities to celebrate Flag Day and the Army’s 238th birthday. (Photo by Maj. Edward Shank)

future Soldier often lasts for years, said Crane. NCOs speak proudly of Soldiers they recruited and mentored, and of subsequent successful careers they have watched unfold.

“We sit in their living rooms, meet the parents, family, friends, and we really do get to know them personally. This personal and yet professional relationship is key to the development of the future Soldier. We see ourselves in them. We recognize the scrawny boy looking for a purpose, or we

recognize the shy girl looking for independence, and we accept the personal challenge to prepare them for training, because at the heart of everything we are as NCOs is a desire to mentor.”

Building tomorrow’s leaders, today

Thanks to the dedication and professionalism of staff and recruiters at US-AREC, future Soldiers arrive well prepared for the rigors of the Army’s initial military training.

The U.S. Army Center for Initial Military Training is TRADOC’s lead for

transforming civilian volunteers into Soldiers who are ready for their first unit of assignment. Drill sergeants and advanced individual training platoon sergeants comprise the core of extended excellence at USACIMT. Approximately 2,200 drill sergeants and 600 AIT platoon sergeants transform nearly 120,000 civilian volunteers into aspiring professionals annually.

“Our drill sergeants and AIT platoon sergeants are disciplined, confident and inspirational leaders,” said USACIMT Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis J. Woods. “If that new Soldier feels compelled to say and think, ‘I want to be just like you,’ then that’s our mark on this path we call the Army profession.”

This is also where the new Soldier meets the very model of the Army profession for the first time, face to face. Facial features set like steel, encircled by the brim of a drill sergeant hat, and a voice that carries a timbre of motivation – it’s a

▼ Army recruits in basic training sound off shortly after running an obstacle course on Fort Benning, Georgia. (U.S. Army photo by Glenn Fawcett)





▶ Drill Sgt. (Staff Sgt.) Jason Moye, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 40th Field Artillery Regiment, yells in the face of Pvt. Janis Edwards on day zero of Basic Combat Training, June 26, 2013, at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. (Photo by Spc. Danielle Gregory)

▶ Drill Sgt. (Staff Sgt.) Jessica Solorio, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 40th Field Artillery Regiment, shows new Soldiers how to hold their weapons while in formation, July 6, 2013, during the second week of Basic Combat Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. (Photo by Spc. Danielle Gregory)

DRILL

visual that transports any Soldier back to the start of his Army career.

These trademarks of the drill sergeant inspire civilian volunteers to believe they are capable of serving honorably as Soldiers.

It's here in Basic Combat Training or One Station Unit Training (where BCT and AIT are combined into one school) that Soldiers learn Army culture during three phases over 10 weeks, referred to as red, white and blue phases. This training takes place at four locations: Fort Jackson, South Carolina (BCT); Fort Sill, Oklahoma (BCT); Fort Benning, Georgia (BCT and OSUT); and Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri (BCT and OSUT).

Each phase builds upon the previous, emphasizing values and ethos as well as warrior tasks and battle drills — the skills needed to survive in combat. Warrior tasks are individual Soldier skills critical to survival; battle drills are team skills



▶ Army ROTC cadet Deniece Tukuafu, from the University of Hawaii, successfully navigates the "Weaver" obstacle during the confidence training course at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington, June 21, 2013. The Army cadets navigated the confidence and obstacle course and rappel tower during their Leader Development and Assessment Course, also known as Warrior Forge. (Photo by Spc. Ryan Hallock)



▶ Nine recruits take the oath of enlistment during a ceremony at the Times Square Recruiting Station, New York City, Oct. 1, 2013. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer K. Yancey)

▶ Staff Sgt. Nicholas Dimiceli, Milwaukee Recruiting Battalion, reunites with Jacob Beringer, a school buddy from a decade ago at St. Agnes School in Butler, Wisconsin. Dimiceli was an eighth grader who read books and did various activities with Beringer, who was then a first-grader. They sit in a classroom where they both went through eighth grade. Beringer is now joining the Army following his reunion with Dimiceli. (Photo by Jorge Gomez)



designed to ensure a unit correctly reacts and survives in combat.

After graduating BCT, Soldiers attend AIT at one of 22 installations across the country to learn the technical skills of their jobs. Depending on the MOS, the length of AIT ranges from four to 48 weeks.

At AIT, it's the platoon sergeant who carries on the mission of mentoring. He or she reinforces values and ethos while the Soldier learns the technical skills to perform within his or her specialty. These platoon sergeants set the tone for a Soldier's first post-training assignment.

Drill sergeants and AIT platoon sergeants and cadre use the Army Learning Model, an outcomes-based learning approach, to build Soldier confidence.

This form of training focuses on critical thinking so that new Soldiers can understand the process of problem solving — how to think, not just what to think. This approach develops Soldiers who can adapt to changing tactical and strategic environments.

"Throughout history, the Army has adapted to changing battlefields," Woods said. "Our new Soldiers must come out of the IMT (initial military training) gate already adaptive — they are tomorrow's leaders."

TRADOC's IMT provides Army units with Soldiers who are agile, adaptive and competent. They are confident and capable of serving honorably as Soldiers and as trusted members of a team, and they identify professionally with others

selflessly serving in the profession of arms.

Selecting and developing adaptive officers of character

In parallel to USACIMT, TRADOC's U.S. Army Cadet Command at Fort Knox, Kentucky, leads the mission to forge the world's finest commissioned Army officers. These officers are trained and educated to become critical thinkers and decision-makers who inspire strength in others. They learn how to negotiate demanding missions while ensuring the welfare, morale and professional development of the Soldiers entrusted to them.

The primary path for commissioning as an officer in the Army is through the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps



▲ Cadet Kenneth Aronhalt from Marion Military Institute, Marion, Alabama, watches the graduation of the 9th and 10th regiments at the Leader Development and Assessment Course at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, before being commissioned on the parade field. (Photo by Jesse Beals)

program. The ROTC program includes recruiting, developing and commissioning individuals who exhibit character, proficiency and dedication — the foundation of the Army profession.

Available at 275 host universities and more than 1,000 affiliated campuses, ROTC offers leadership experience, education and training valuable in military and post-military professions. Upon graduation, ROTC cadets may receive a commission as an Army second lieutenant on active duty, in the Army Reserve or in the Army National Guard. After commissioning, these new officers receive specialized, branch-specific training.

Producing more than 70 percent of all commissioned officers, Army ROTC has been the largest source of officer accessions since World War II. However, notes Brig. Gen. Peggy C. Combs, commanding general of Cadet Command and Fort Knox, “The operational environment, technology and the learning sciences have all changed since Cadet Command stood up in 1986. The Army’s senior ROTC program is critical to acquiring the talent and developing adaptive officers who can effectively lead their Soldiers in complex environments while understanding the implications of their decisions and how it impacts the mission.”

Acquiring the right talent means

Cadet Command will focus on more “precision recruiting” of potential cadets, based on Army requirements. Recruiting — and Army ROTC’s roughly \$250 million annual scholarship budget — will target science, technology, engineering and mathematics majors, nurses and those with specific language skills.

As to the ROTC program itself, USACC has implemented a number of initiatives, to include revising the curriculum in an initiative called Basic Officer Leader Development, or BOLD Transformation. The BOLD initiative supports the Army Leader Development Strategy in developing adaptive junior leaders who can operate and succeed in the complex environments the Army will face in the future.

This new Army ROTC curriculum has been researched, tested and refined to ensure new second lieutenants start their Army careers with the skills and abilities needed to execute basic officer leader tasks. The curriculum has also been redesigned to improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and will offer a broader portfolio of summer internships, language training and other specialty training.

Finally, USACC has added more mandatory university/college-conducted classes as an essential part of every cadet’s education. This new curriculum is expected to be integrated into ROTC college class-

rooms in the 2014-15 academic year.

BOLD Transformation encompasses more than curriculum changes. This summer, Cadet Command is consolidating the Leader’s Training Course and Leader Development and Assessment Course, or LDAC, at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Among its many benefits, this consolidation will create opportunities for older cadets to lead and train underclass cadets during summer training, under the supervision of cadre.

In 2016, a new Cadet Initial Entry Training course will be required for all ROTC cadets. LDAC will transform and become the Cadet Leaders Course, providing multi-echelon squad- and platoon-level training events for all cadets following their junior year.

In the end, TRADOC’s oversight of and USACC’s focus on recruiting, developing and commissioning officers of character, capable of thriving in a variety of operational environments, will ensure the U.S. Army is led by the very best.

TRADOC: the foundation of starting strong. **sm**

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command’s focus on selecting the very best enlisted and officers and investing wisely in their training and education, benefits not just the Army, but also every individual who travels this pathway of professionalism. Helping Soldiers start strong provides a solid base of values and knowledge that will help ensure success throughout and after military service.



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Beginning with strength

Story by the Fort Sill Cannoneer staff
Photos by Jeff Crawley

STARTING Strong is a concept woven throughout the fabric of Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where enlisted Soldiers and officers take their first steps toward Army careers.

Private First Class Jeanine Smith becomes a Soldier

Private First Class Jeanine Smith's journey began before she entered Basic Combat Training at the Fires Center of Excellence, and even before she enlisted.

Being 45 pounds over Army weight standards, Smith began an exercise regimen, along with other potential recruits, with Recruiter Staff Sgt. Christopher Everett, Springfield (Missouri) Recruiting Station. Once a week for 90 minutes, Everett put the potential recruits through a running, push-up and sit-up program, similar to how Soldiers exercise.

"He (Everett) motivated us, he stuck

with us, he pushed us," said Smith, age 22. "He was good."

Smith also supplemented the workout with her own exercise program and changed her diet. Several months later and 50 pounds lighter, Smith qualified for the Army.

Although she was offered work in such areas as the medical and dental fields, as well as a chaplain assistant, which might have pleased her parents, who are both pastors, the 13P military occupational specialty multiple launch rocket system operations/fire direction specialist caught her interest.

"They recently opened up 13-Papa to females, and it was something different," said Smith, who was a culinary arts student at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield. "And, I'm a risk taker."

Smith reported to Fort Sill in January 2014 for BCT. She said the whole

recruiting process — talking to recruiters, the PT, viewing Army Web training, the Future Soldiers program and going through a Sexual Harassment and Assault and Response Prevention session — had prepared her for BCT.

"The recruiters did a pretty good job of bringing it all home for us," Smith said. "We even took a SHARP class."

Smith said she admired all of the drill sergeants assigned to her and the other new Soldiers of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 79th Field Artillery Regiment.

"They cared. They invested a lot of time in us, they believed in us and pushed us to do better," said Smith, who is the first member of her family to serve in the military. "They were very well-rounded NCOs."

Smith said there were many days during BCT that she just wanted to give up because she was being challenged and stretched beyond her comfort zone.



Start Strong: where enlisted Soldiers and officers take their first steps toward Army careers

"Going through basic training made me realize that I wasn't alone, because my drill sergeants were once in my shoes," Smith said. "They were not trying to be mean, but they honestly cared and saw potential leadership in my battle buddies and me."

Smith recalled that the drill sergeants had an open-door policy for the trainees. This was particularly helpful for her when a close uncle died in her fifth week of BCT, and she was unable to attend the funeral.

"My drill sergeants were very supportive and encouraged me," she said.

One of Smith's favorite parts of BCT was when the trainees got to serve in lead-

ership positions, like duty squad leader.

"We would go out to the field earlier than everybody and set up tents, and ensure the ranges were ready to go."

Smith said she would follow her drill sergeants into battle.

"I would love to be downrange with them and to learn more from them," she said.

At the end of nine weeks, Smith graduated along with the rest of the Soldiers in her battery. About a dozen family members and friends from Springfield made the six-and-a-half-hour drive to attend her graduation.

"I was overjoyed that my journey and hard work to join the Army did not go in

vain," she said, "and that this was a new road that I willingly chose to take to better myself."

Assigned to Battery A, 1st Battalion, 78th Field Artillery, in the six-week Advanced Individual Training for 13P at Fort Sill, Smith was one of five women in the 15-student class.

The AIT Soldiers received classroom and field instruction from Soldiers as well as Army civilians to learn their jobs. The students were now guided by platoon sergeants outside the classroom.

"The platoon sergeants lay down the foundation rules and support the students," Smith said. "They let us know what we're supposed to be doing, and what we're not supposed to be doing."

The academics included a lot of computer training, and the platoon sergeants, who also possess the 13P MOS, were always there, ready to assist a struggling Soldier, Smith said.

"We can always take it upon ourselves to set up a study group or ask our platoon

Pfc. Jeanine Smith, a Multiple Launch Rocket System Operations/Fire Direction specialist, outside her barracks at Anderson Hall on Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Smith, who completed her Advanced Individual Training in May, is stationed at Fort Hood, Texas.

"Going through basic training made me realize that I wasn't alone, because my drill sergeants were once in my shoes."

—Pfc. Jeanine Smith



Pvt. Angel Toji, an Air Defense Battle Management System Operator specialist, raises the antenna mast on the Sentinel radar. Toji graduated from Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in May and is stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.

sergeants,” Smith said. “It’s all about opening your mouth and having the personal courage to ask or say, ‘I need help.’”

When Smith graduates from AIT, she’ll report to Fort Hood, Texas, for her first assignment.

“I have learned during my training that the best way to learn new things is to challenge yourself,” she said. “Learning your job and new responsibilities is a challenge in itself, but the good thing to know is you have your battle buddies to assist you.”

So, how has the Army changed Smith? “It’s instilled more discipline, focus and respect in me,” said Smith, clarifying she wasn’t too wild before.

Before she enlisted, Smith said was going to try the Army for three years and see how she liked it. Now, she knows she wants to make it a career.

“I like it already, and I’m looking for-

ward to becoming an NCO and eventually becoming an officer,” she said.

“Being a new Soldier, I see challenges as an opportunity to drive and push you harder. When you have to face challenges, do not get intimidated. You should look every challenge in the face, no matter how great or small, and tell yourself you are in control,” Smith said.

She added she plans to embrace every opportunity the Army has to offer, such as tuition assistance.

“I’m always willing to learn more, so I’ll take advantage of anything that will better me as a person (and) as a Soldier.”

A better life for Angel Toji

With an Army career still a few years away, 18-year-old Angel Toji’s lack of self-confidence contrasted with the mindset he would later develop in the Army.

In his early 20s, the son of Japanese and Hispanic parents developed a strong desire to improve the lot of his family. Toji spoke of their struggle to emigrate from Mexico to the United States.

“I was working in the fast food industry and trying to help my family out, but I could see if I didn’t make a change and leave that kind of work, I could end up doing that the rest of my life,” he said.

At the prompting of his brother-in-law, who suggested he look into what the Army had to offer, Toji visited an Army recruiter.

“The recruiter told me the kinds of things I wanted to hear,” he said. “I wanted to do something different and become part of something bigger than just myself.”

The recruiter spoke plainly and honestly to him, Toji recalled, telling him the Army would take care of him. It

Pvt. Angel Toji, an Air Defense Battle Management System Operator specialist, stands in front of a Sentinel radar, which he learned to use in Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Toji completed the training in May and is now stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.

would also provide him with a platform to achieve great things in his life.

Toji sees his budding Army career as a great way to graduate college, something else that, in addition to military service, would be a first for his family.

The recruiter advised Toji to prepare mentally, emotionally and physically, as the challenges he faced in BCT would test him.

He realized one of the Army’s principles — the strength of a Soldier is his family — during some of those challenges. Letters from home, his family’s love and their encouragement and enthusiasm for what he committed to helped him persevere.

In other instances, Toji leaned on the words of his drill sergeants who told Soldiers bad things will happen that are beyond their control. At those times all he could do was keep pushing on, to develop a resiliency of character and spirit knowing better days were ahead.

“The recruiter told me the kinds of things I wanted to hear. I wanted to do something different and become part of something bigger than just myself.”

—Pvt. Angel Toji





Advanced Individual Training Soldiers recite the Soldier's Creed at the 2014 U.S. Army All-American Bowl at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Jan. 4, 2014. The Soldier's Creed highlights the values that are expected of an American Soldier. (Photo by Pfc. Ian Valley)

Like many civilians transforming into Soldiers, Toji found drill sergeants intimidating at first. Later, he appreciated their efforts to help the basic trainees and make them into better Soldiers.

Toji said drill sergeants constantly honed the basic soldiering skills they would need in a potentially hostile deployed environment.

"They tested us on maintaining awareness of our surroundings — either something missing or something new that wasn't previously there. They would change something in our bay, and we would have to figure out what they did. It was those lessons that reminded us on a deployment, this could be the difference between life and death," he said.

Toji said BCT renewed his patience, especially for the precise things that needed to be done.

"I learned I could help others who struggled ... and keep my composure throughout," he said.

Graduation arrived and with it the realization he had completed something no one else in his family had achieved. For a young man who struggled with self-worth issues, Toji brimmed with confidence as he celebrated with his mother and two sisters.

"It was the best feeling in the world," he said.

Just like the drill sergeants who guided and shaped him in BCT, Toji appreciates his platoon sergeants in AIT. His instructors ensure he and his classmates

understand the material they're learning to become air defenders.

For a person who scored well in mechanics on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test, Toji first was attracted to maintenance on a Chinook helicopter, but learned he didn't qualify for that MOS.

Instead, he found a good fit as an Air Defense Battle Management System operator. Though he would be the Soldier "driving" the equipment, the job's maintenance component also required him to stick his head under the hood, making sure everything operated according to Army standards.

The breadth of instruction, combined with something new and interesting, captured Toji's attention and he said he has found his niche in his MOS, and in the Army. Along the way, he's learned to take concise notes during each block of training and work with his battle buddies. This became especially important during a particularly difficult challenge.

"We all had a hard time with the communications block of instruction," said Toji, who needed a 72 percent to pass his test. "I scored in the mid-80s and was hugely relieved and excited."

For his class, it was another obstacle successfully overcome.

Passing a test is just another step in his development as a Soldier. It also serves as a reminder of the value of teamwork, and overcoming adversity.

Just like his blood family who helped him through tough times in BCT, Toji now sees the strangers he met during the first days of training as members of his Army family — brothers and sisters in arms who are "always there for each other."

Wherever he ends up, Toji said he will follow the professional example his noncommissioned officers have set.

"They are outstanding and regularly inspire us to follow them and become NCOs ourselves," he said.

With more than three years to serve on his first enlistment, Toji intends to complete college. From there, whether his service is characterized as an NCO, a warrant officer or an officer, he will embrace that challenge when it arises.

After Toji completes AIT, he will join his first active duty unit, and become part of tomorrow's contingent of air defenders protecting the nation from the threat of aerial or space attacks.

"I feel ready to hold my own in Forces Command; I know there will be a lot more to learn along the way, but I'm ready for anything the Army throws at me," said Toji. **sm**



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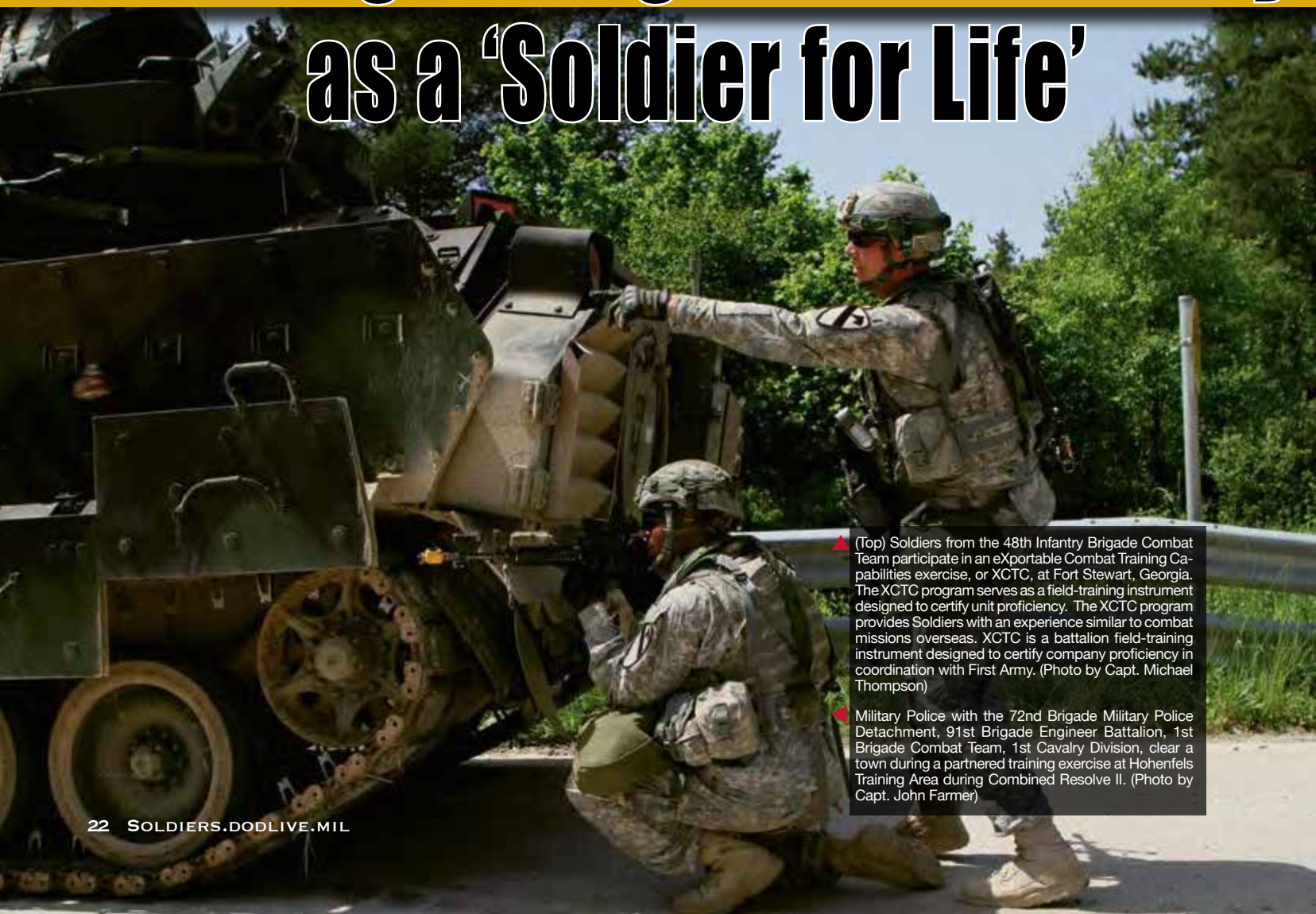
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Serving Strong in the U.S. Army as a 'Soldier for Life'



▲ (Top) Soldiers from the 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team participate in an eXportable Combat Training Capabilities exercise, or XCTC, at Fort Stewart, Georgia. The XCTC program serves as a field-training instrument designed to certify unit proficiency. The XCTC program provides Soldiers with an experience similar to combat missions overseas. XCTC is a battalion field-training instrument designed to certify company proficiency in coordination with First Army. (Photo by Capt. Michael Thompson)

▲ Military Police with the 72nd Brigade Military Police Detachment, 91st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, clear a town during a partnered training exercise at Hohenfels Training Area during Combined Resolve II. (Photo by Capt. John Farmer)



▲ Staff Sgt. Bernard Way, ammo sergeant for Battery B, 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery Regiment, hands out ammo to Spc. Kamani Henry, acting ammo chief of the "Bad Move" howitzer. (Photo courtesy of the Georgia National Guard)

▲ Pvt. Dechavious Merritt runs down a cleared path through a mine field to take the first piece of the simulated bangalore to his team members waiting at their objective. "It's an adrenaline rush to be in the heat of the moment knowing that another team is waiting on us to clear something so they can continue their mission," Merritt said. (Photo courtesy of the Georgia National Guard)

Story by U.S. Army Forces Command

THE leadership skills and values that U.S. Army Soldiers develop while "Serving Strong" in uniform are the same skills and values that make them valuable life-long citizens and employees within their communities, said Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, commanding general of U.S. Army Forces Command.

The Soldier for Life mindset is a holistic approach to the lifecycle career of a Soldier. The U.S. Army takes care of teammates by ensuring Soldiers start strong, serve strong and reintegrate strong so they remain Army Strong while serving their communities after their military service

ends. In fact, the Army's strategic imperative of sustaining the all-volunteer force is directly affected by how well Soldiers serve, and how well veterans reintegrate back into their communities.

The nationwide Army program is a direct initiative of the Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, and was created as a way to address some of the challenges facing Soldiers and their families while they're serving and after separation from the Army, said Lt. Col. Steven George, director of the Soldier for Life Program Southeast Region. That region includes many of U.S. Army Forces Command's largest posts and units, such as Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Fort Stewart, Georgia; and

U.S. Army Reserve Command, co-located with FORSCOM at Fort Bragg.

Comprising 85 percent of the Army's operational force, FORSCOM's deployable formations include three corps headquarters, nine division headquarters, 10 U.S. Army Reserve Sustainment Commands, three functional general officer-level commands and 84 active-component, brigade-sized formations — including 33 brigade combat teams. It's responsible for manning, equipping and training 265,000 active-component Soldiers, and training and readiness oversight of 560,000 National Guard and Reserve Soldiers.

The Department of the Army Soldier For Life program's Serve Strong phase

brings together FORSCOM, the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, First Army and other Army commands for a common focus: “Bring unity of effort to Army, government and community action for Soldiers and their Families,” George said during a recent briefing at FORSCOM’s headquarters.

Building relationships

The program specializes in building relationships between Army commands, such as Installation Management Command, Training and Doctrine Command, Human Resources Command, the Army Corps of Engineers, Army Medical Command, the civilian aides to the secretary of the Army and the Army Continuing

Education System; and civilian universities and career apprenticeships, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Labor, private and non-profit organizations and state and local partners.

The Soldier for Life office conducts engagements to develop understanding and awareness of the employment, education and health care programs that exist or are evolving to assist Soldiers, veterans and their families as they reintegrate following their service to the nation, George said. Soldier for Life seeks to connect national organizations through a network of contacts to enhance the transition experience and ensure Soldiers, veterans and their families have access to the right information at the right time to make the best decision regarding their future.



► Spc. Courtney Stephenson, left, assigned to the 248th Medical Detachment, Veterinary Support Services, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and Spc. Bum Kwak, assigned to Company C, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, dissect a goat's heart during a biology lab at the Forward Operating Base Sharana Education Center in Paktika province, Afghanistan, April 12, 2013. (Photo by Sgt. Mark A. Moore II)

▼ 2nd Lt. Ashley Murray, (left) a volunteer instructor assigned to 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2/10 Security Forces Assistance Brigade, Forward Operating Base Sharana, Afghanistan, explains an arithmetic problem to Soldiers attending the Functional Academic Skills and General Technical improvement class held at the FOB's education center, April 12, 2013. (Photo by Sgt. Mark A. Moore II)



Whether Soldiers serve for four years, 20 years or more, they will have the tools to succeed after the Army with the proper preparation, said Sgt. Maj. Shane Chapman, the program’s senior enlisted advisor.

The Army offers 47 military occupation specialties in which Soldiers can receive certifications in 96 different areas that directly translate in the civilian world, Chapman said.

The service also offers Soldiers 13 apprenticeships, including piping, welding, trucking, sheet-metal work, software engineer, law enforcement and firefighting.

Service to nation

“Soldier for Life is our Army’s recognition of the Soldiers who join the Army and contribute to the nation,” Allyn said. “We are going to sustain that service to the nation, whether they keep the uniform on or transition back to civilian service in their communities. It’s our commitment to prepare them for that transition if they choose to leave the uniformed service.” Depending on the individual, this transition may include the use of education benefits as well as certification programs that could help Soldiers easily transition their military training and professional experiences into a civilian career.

“Between 2006 and 2011, nearly 850,000 Soldiers returned to communities in our country,” Allyn said, “and they returned back to all but 20 counties in all 50 states.” As part of the Soldier For Life program, the Army is connecting Soldiers

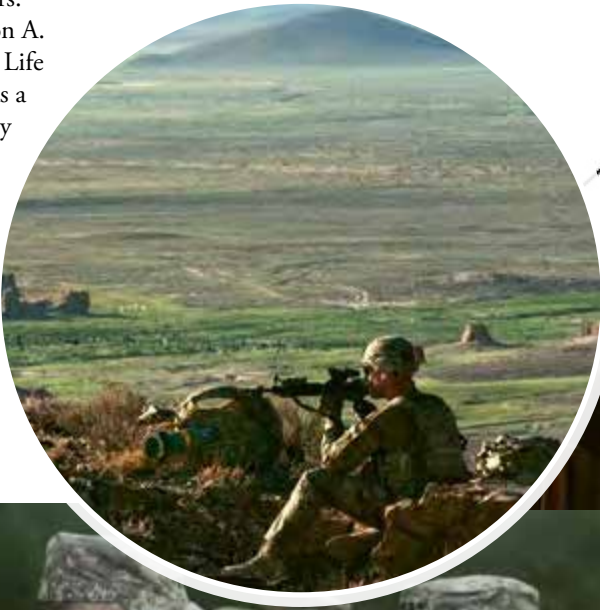
with government and private organizations within states and communities, he said.

“It’s a full-spectrum effort, designed to begin about a year before a Soldier is scheduled to separate from the military, to provide them with a clear understanding and a smooth transition back to the community they will rejoin,” Allyn said. “This is a big deal.”

Fort Campbell, home to the Army’s 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Army Special Forces and other military units, opened the Pfc. Milton A. Lee Soldier for Life Center in November 2013. According to Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program (formerly Army Career and Alumni Program) statistics, the program currently works with more than 4,500 Soldiers within two years of separation and another 2,900 recently separated service members.

“The Milton A. Lee Soldier for Life Center serves as a one-stop facility anchoring the Fort Campbell transition campus along with building 5668, which is currently

Soldier for life is a direct initiative of the Chief of Staff of the Army, and was created as a way to address some of the challenges facing Soldiers and their families while they’re serving and after separation from the Army.



► (Inset) Spc. Eric Leveault, an infantryman with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, monitors movement near an observation point overlooking the Darwazgay Pass in Zabul province, Afghanistan, June 23, 2014. Leveault was part of a joint air assault mission conducted with Afghan National Army soldiers assigned to the 1st Kandak, 2nd Battalion, 205th Corps. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Whitney Houston)

► Commanding General of U.S. Army Forces Command Gen. Daniel B. Allyn tours Fort Stewart, Georgia, to observe the 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team’s eXportable Combat Training Capabilities exercise. The XCTC program provides Soldiers with an experience similar to combat missions overseas. More than 2,000 Georgia Guardsmen converged on the regional training center at Fort Stewart, minimizing costs and time otherwise spent traveling to one of the Army’s combat training centers in Fort Irwin, California, or Fort Polk, Louisiana. (Photo by Capt. Michael Thompson)





occupied by the Department of Veterans Affairs,” said Harold Riggins, transition services manager for Fort Campbell’s Soldier for Life TAP. The center houses the transition program, the Reserve Component Transition Center, the Department of Veterans Affairs and three Veterans Services Organizations.

The three organizations that are incorporated into the facility are Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs. According to Riggins, the center offers assistance to serving and transitioning Soldiers, be it through attaining college or technical degrees, civilian employment opportunities, starting a new business or accessing federal and state benefits.

Organizations such as Soldier for Life TAP, Army Community Service and the Employee Readiness Program work together to place serving Soldiers on the path to post-military success. At Fort Campbell, these organizations frequently partner to host job fairs, which attract employers on an international, national and local scale.

“We are partnered with 400 companies assisting in taking care of and hiring

veterans,” Riggins said. “Our most recent job fair included 67 national and international companies and 71 local companies. That’s 138 organizations here to take care of our veterans.”

Others agree. First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden spoke to more than 1,200 Soldiers and family members at Fort Campbell, April 23, 2014, as part of the Fort Campbell Veterans Jobs Summit and Career Forum. The first lady announced a cutting-edge online tool designed to help veterans, transitioning service members and military spouses find employment. The Veterans Employment Center is a new feature on www.ebenefits.va.gov, where transitioning service members and others within the military community can link up with employers and find valuable ways to translate military skills into civilian opportunities.

On the site, Soldiers can type their military occupational specialties into the military skills translator and the website will match military jobs with civilian skill sets. Users can find job opportunities posted by employers and pursue the leads immediately.

College and benefits information will be easily accessible and companies will be

“We are partnered with 400 companies assisting in taking care of and hiring veterans.”

— Harold Riggins, Transition Services Manager, Fort Campbell, Kentucky

Retired Sgt. Jeffrey Adams approaches a recently constructed residence in Elbert, Colorado, June 25, 2013, with his daughter, Jewel, 5. Adams received the home at no cost from Homes for Our Troops, a non-profit organization founded in 2004. Adams lost his legs after an improvised explosive device detonated under his vehicle in Afghanistan. (Photo by Dustin Senger)

able to connect with individuals they are looking to hire.

Organized by a partnership of public, private and nonprofit agencies, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Labor, the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense’s Military Spouse Employment Partnership, the Fort Campbell event was part of the White House’s Joining Forces initiative. This initiative began as a way to support the service members and their families, particularly through employment, education and wellness opportunities.

Leader development

In addition to Fort Campbell, Soldiers nationwide in the Army Force Generation “reset” phase are training and getting ready for their next mission. Home-station training focuses on individual, leader and collective training done at units and Army posts. Part of the “reset” phase is personal and leader development for Soldiers.

The FORSCOM Leader Development Toolbox is a collaborative effort with other Army commands featuring links to Army doctrine, the Center for Army Leadership, the Combined Arms Center, the Center for Army Profession and Ethics, the Army Training Network and other resources. This is part of the Army chief of staff’s ongoing strategic priority “Adaptive Army Leaders for a Complex World.”

Forces Command unveiled the FORSCOM Leader Development Toolbox, March 12, 2014. The toolbox is a comprehensive online resource for Soldier-leaders across all Army components and cohorts (officer, noncommissioned officer,



Pfc. Ana G. Walker participates in predeployment Tactical Combat Casualty Care training with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division’s Female Engagement Team. (Photo by Sgt. Ida Irby)

warrant officer and Army civilian). The site links the institutional Army to the operational Army, providing leadership news, practical tools and best practices across the total force. Found at <http://www.forscom.army.mil/leaderdevelopment>, the site connects leader-development expertise across the Army while benefiting from the participation and contributions of leaders Army-wide.

The secretary of the Army, chief of staff of the Army and sergeant major of the Army approved the Army Leader Development Strategy in June 2013. It codifies the Army senior leaders’ vision and strategy for leader development of all Army professionals through lifelong training, education and experiences acquired through opportunities in the operational, institutional and self-development areas.

Beyond training and development at home station, strategy includes professional military education — such as centers for noncommissioned officers, officers and warrant officers — and functional training courses. These train serving Soldiers, leaders and Army civilians for assignments requiring specific functional skills, tasks and knowledge.

Unit training

In addition to military schools and

self-development programs through online degree programs and more than 160 Army Education Center campuses worldwide, the Army’s four Combat Training Centers focus on Soldiers’ collective training with military exercises for brigade-size and above units. Two of those centers are assigned to Forces Command. The National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, and the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, specialize in Decisive Action Training Environments, Regional Alignment of Forces training, Global Response Force training, hybrid threat training and mission rehearsal exercises. They provide realism to help Soldiers prepare for the unexpected on the battlefield.

Trained units and competent leaders have always been and remain critical to the Army’s operational success. Personal opportunities and individual decisions also abound for each “Serve Strong” Soldier, both active and reserve.

A “primary concern in recruiting for the U.S. Army Reserve is the difficulty in finding prior-service Soldiers willing to serve in units that are in remote geographic areas where vacancies exist,” said Lt. Gen. Howard B. Bromberg, deputy chief of staff, U.S. Army G-1. Our strategy to attract prior-service Soldiers is to engage those active-component Soldiers earlier in the transitioning process by appealing to

their sense of service, valued contribution through continued service and remaining a Soldier for Life,” Bromberg said.

Even with new opportunities to “Serve Strong” and innovative online offerings, the values that have defined the Army for 239 years remain unchanged.

“The Army as a profession embodies the imperative that as each mission is accomplished, values, character and integrity are continuously reinforced,” Allyn said. “The commitment of the Army includes providing an environment where every Soldier and Army civilian is able to employ and develop skills through career-long learning, development and service to the profession. This shared commitment to integration and excellence fuels the spirit of Soldiers and Army civilians to accept the challenge and achieve the highest standards of character, discipline and competence.” **SM**































































SOLDIER FOR LIFE

Insignia of the United States Armed Forces — OFFICERS

0-1	0-2	0-3	0-4	0-5	0-6	0-7	0-8	0-9	0-10	Special
ARMY • AIR FORCE • MARINES										
 Second Lieutenant (2LT)	 First Lieutenant (1LT)	 Captain (CPT)	 Major (MAJ)	 Lieutenant Colonel (LTC)	 Colonel (COL)	 Brigadier General (BG)	 Major General (MG)	 Lieutenant General (LTG)	 General (GEN)	 General of the Army (GA)
NAVY • COAST GUARD										
 Ensign (ENS)	 Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG)	 Lieutenant (LT)	 Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)	 Commander (CDR)	 Captain (CAPT)	 Rear Admiral Lower Half (RADM)(L)	 Rear Admiral Upper Half (RADM)(U)	 Vice Admiral (VADM)	 Admiral (ADM)	 Fleet Admiral (FADM)
W-1		W-2		W-3		W-4		W-5		
ARMY										
 Warrant Officer (WO1)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW2)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW3)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW4)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW5)		
NAVY • COAST GUARD										
 Chief Warrant Officer (CW01)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW02)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW03)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW04)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW05)		
NO WARRANT OFFICER USCG		 USCG		 USCG		 USCG		NO WARRANT OFFICER USCG		
MARINES										
 Warrant Officer (WO)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW02)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW03)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW04)		 Chief Warrant Officer (CW05)		
AIR FORCE										
NO WARRANT		NO WARRANT		NO WARRANT		NO WARRANT		NO WARRANT		

Insignia of the United States Armed Forces — ENLISTED

E-1	E-2	E-3	E-4	E-5	E-6	E-7	E-8	E-9	Senior Enlisted Advisors				
ARMY													
 Private E-1 (PV1)	 Private E-2 (PV2)	 Private First Class (PFC)	 Specialist (SPC)	 Sergeant (SGT)	 Staff Sergeant (SSG)	 Sergeant First Class (SFC)	 Master Sergeant (MSG)	 First Sergeant (1SG)	 Sergeant Major (SGM)	 Command Sergeant Major (CSM)	 Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA)		
MARINES													
 Private (Pvt)	 Private First Class (PFC)	 Lance Corporal (LCpl)	 Corporal (Cpl)	 Sergeant (Sgt)	 Staff Sergeant (SSgt)	 Gunnery Sergeant (GySgt)	 Master Sergeant (MSGt)	 First Sergeant (1stSgt)	 Master Gunnery Sergeant (MGySgt)	 Sergeant Major (SgtMaj)	 Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps (SgtMajMC)		
AIR FORCE													
 Airman Basic (AB)	 Airman (Amn)	 Airman First Class (A1C)	 Senior Airman (SrA)	 Staff Sergeant (SSgt)	 Technical Sergeant (TSgt)	 Master Sergeant (MSGt)	 First Sergeant (E-7)	 Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt)	 First Sergeant (E-8)	 Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt)	 First Sergeant (E-9)	 Command Chief Master Sergeant (CCM Sgt)	 Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF)
NAVY													
 Seaman Recruit (SR)	 Seaman Apprentice (SA)	 Seaman (SN)	 Petty Officer Third Class (PO3)	 Petty Officer Second Class (PO2)	 Petty Officer First Class (PO1)	 Chief Petty Officer (CPO)	 Senior Chief Petty Officer (SCPO)	 Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPO)	 Force or Fleet Command Master Chief Petty Officer (FORMC) (FLTMC)	 Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON)			
COAST GUARD													
 Seaman Recruit (SR)	 Seaman Apprentice (SA)	 Seaman (SN)	 Petty Officer Third Class (PO3)	 Petty Officer Second Class (PO2)	 Petty Officer First Class (PO1)	 Chief Petty Officer (CPO)	 Senior Chief Petty Officer (SCPO)	 Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPO)	 Command Master Chief (CMC)	 Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPO-CG)			

Source: www.defenselink.mil

Educating Soldiers to **serve strong**

Story by Staff Sgt. Alexandria Brimage-Gray, 27th Public Affairs Detachment

IT is important for a Soldier to build and maintains his technical skills, leadership abilities and education throughout his career. Professional credentialing and certificates help Soldiers become better at their occupational specialties, as well as prepare them for promotions and the transition into civilian life. Two Soldiers, 2nd Lt. Antwan Smalls and Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson, exemplify those ideals in the Serve Strong phase of the Soldier for Life program.

2nd Lt. Antwan Smalls

After receiving a bachelor of science in information systems and computer science from Charleston Southern University in North Charleston, South Carolina, Antwan Smalls' life seemed to be going as planned. In June 2007, he purchased a home, and that November he married the woman of his dreams. Then the unexpected happened.

"I had just gotten married and my wife lost her job," Smalls said. "I could have made it doing what I was doing, but I wanted more for us, especially if we were going to start a family."

Initially, Smalls wanted to join the

Army as a commissioned officer, but his recruiter indicated the aspiring Soldier's general technical score — a score that determines the schools and positions a person is qualified for — was too low for some jobs.

Smalls was left with a decision: Forget about his plan to become a Soldier, or enlist. He chose the latter, and enlisted as a signal systems support specialist — a job that required him to troubleshoot network, computer and printer issues for his brigade.

To ensure he stayed on track to meet his goals while serving, Smalls shared his plans to become an officer and sought the advice of his leaders.

"When I arrived to my first unit, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kansas, I let my leadership know that my goals were to become a commissioned officer, so they sent me to a Functional Academic Skills Training class immediately," Smalls said.

The FAST class is an on-duty program that affords Soldiers and commanders the opportunity to enhance Soldiers' performance on duty by improving their basic math and reading skills, said Fort Bragg,

North Carolina, Education Services Officer Mike Brennan.

"Generally speaking, FAST helps Soldiers with their general-technical component on the Armed Forces Classification Test, allowing them to seek warrant officer (or) commissioned officer programs, cross-training or, for retention, to stay in the service."

The FAST course brought Smalls one step closer to his goal of being an Army officer. "The class allowed me to increase my GT score, which then enabled me to submit my packet for Officer Candidate School," he said.

Smalls was deployed to Kirkuk, Iraq, in support of Operation New Dawn, at the time he applied.

"I had to submit my packet to the S-1 (personnel); they then had to set up a special local board for me. This board convened and they were responsible for reviewing my packet before it was sent to Human Resource Command," Smalls said. "I had to wait three to four months before I received an email with my board results."

Once he received the email, it wasn't the news he had anticipated. "My initial packet was considered for the program, but I did not get selected," he said.

While he was disheartened at the time, the disappointment didn't stop Smalls from pursuing his goals. Wanting to make himself competitive within the military service and with his civilian counterparts, he decided to pursue additional information technology certifications.

"I was certified on multiple platforms, to include Networks+, Information Assurance, Security+ and Microsoft," Smalls said.

Because of his duties and unit responsibilities, the Army paid for training and certification on these systems. Smalls took advantage of the programs offered through the Army education office to achieve his new goals.

Many tests and certifications are available free of charge to Soldiers through Army education offices at nearly every Army installation, Brennan said. In addition to those provided free to all Soldiers, other specialized certification tests have been approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs and can be accessed based on a Soldiers' occupation. There is an allowance within the GI Bill permitting Soldiers to receive training for some certification programs, provided they meet specific eligibility requirements.

When Smalls decided to leave active duty in September 2012, his Army training, work experience and industry-recognized certifications set him up for future success.

"Joining the Army was the best decision that I could have ever made from a career standpoint. The Army put me further ahead and kept me on track to do everything that I wanted to do prior to joining," Smalls said. "With the certificates that I received from the Army, I was ahead of my peers and qualified for mid-level jobs. The training that I received would allow me to qualify for just about any IT job available."

After leaving active duty, Smalls landed a job with Engility Corp. as a Prophet System field software engineer, where he provides software support to active Army, National Guard and Reserve units to ensure their information systems remain functional and available to support mission readiness.

Although he enjoyed his time in

the enlisted ranks and his new role as a civilian, Smalls was still driven to pursue his original goal of becoming an Army officer. He spoke to a career counselor during the transition process and she told him about the direct-commissioning program available through the Army Reserve. The program allows candidates with specialized skills and backgrounds to fill critical shortages in the Reserve commissioned officer corps.

"I was very excited about this opportunity, but I had to convince my wife about me staying in the military," Smalls explained. "Her main concern was with further deployments and stability. When I told her about the two-year stabilization, she was sold," Smalls added.

Smalls began service in the Reserve that November and was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 108th Regiment (Signal Company), 100th Training Division, 80th Training Command (Total Army School System) in Augusta, Georgia. The unit allowed him to maintain his active duty skills, stabilize near his home, and pursue his dream of becoming a commissioned officer.

Through persistence, patience and flexibility, Smalls accomplished a goal that had eluded him more than once. He submitted his packet for the Army Reserve direct-commission program in March 2013 and received an acceptance letter five months later.

"Joining the Army was the best decision that I could have ever made from a career standpoint. The Army put me further ahead and kept me on track to do everything that I wanted to do." — 2nd Lt. Antwan Smalls

November 24, 2013, his wedding anniversary, Smalls took the oath of the commissioned officer with his wife by his side. The next day he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Signal Corps.

Smalls has embraced his new role as an officer and has a few words of advice for Soldiers just coming into the Army.

"When they come in, Soldiers need to have an end game," Smalls advised. "Once they have identified the end game, they need to let their noncommissioned officers, warrant officers and officers know what that is," he said. "They are there to push you toward your goals and hold you accountable to accomplish that goal."

"When you accomplish your goals," Smalls said, "it creates a win-win situation for everyone because they can proudly say, 'That was my Soldier.'"



Army Reserve 2nd Lt. Antwan Smalls with his wife, Kierre, following his February promotion ceremony at Fort Gordon, Georgia. (Photo courtesy of 2nd Lt. Antwan Smalls)



Army Reserve 2nd Lt. Antwan Smalls instructs his fellow lieutenants during the Signal Corps Basic Officer Leadership Course at Fort Gordon, Georgia. The course will teach Smalls and his classmates the basic skills they will need to lead Soldiers. (Photo courtesy of 2nd Lt. Antwan Smalls)

Educating Soldiers to serve strong

(continued)

Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson

Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson entered the Delayed Entry Program with the Louisiana Army National Guard in 1989, and attended basic training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, becoming a unit-level communication repairman.

"I liked what I had experienced during my training in preparation for entering the National Guard," Wilson said.

He met his wife in AIT, and after completing his training, returned to Monroe, Louisiana, to work in the construction business.

Wilson was getting by, but his opportunities at home were limited, and he and his wife were looking for a change. So in January 1992, he made the Army his full-time profession.

He attended AIT a second time at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, this time to become a utilities equipment repairman. Since then, he's attended bus driver training, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense training, and training at the Inspector General School, among others.

Wilson has served 23 years in the Army and is currently stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with the 10th Military

Police Battalion (U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command), 3rd Military Police Group (CID). The Army Career Alumni Program has allowed him the opportunity to earn a North Carolina Commercial Driver's License through the Fort Bragg Commercial Truck Driver Course.

"I feel at peace about transitioning outside of the military because of this new skill set," he said. "Although I have the maintenance background, I now have a skill set that is in high demand, so I am even more confident in my ability to provide for my family."

Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program-provided services help ease the Army-to-civilian transition and work to reduce unemployment and enhance future recruiting. The services are available to active, Reserve and National Guard Soldiers and their spouses, as well as Department of the Army civilians and their spouses, up to 180 days after separation.

It is very important for a Soldier to attend the mandatory Soldier for Life TAP (formerly Army Career and Alumni Program) briefings prior to transitioning out of the military, said Bill McMillan, Fort Bragg transition service manager.

"When the Soldier makes the decision to leave the military or retire, the next step is to get them to (Soldier for Life TAP)," McMillan said.

In conjunction with Soldier for Life TAP, Fort Bragg provides a service called Transition University. Within Transition University there are four tracks that Soldiers can pursue: employment, vocational, bachelor's and entrepreneurial.

"To get the Soldiers what they are entitled to, they need to get in here 12 months before, so that they can attend the five-day Transition Goals, Planning and Success workshop," McMillan said. "Then they go directly into the track they select."

Wilson chose the vocational track as he transitions out of the military. It was through the classes and counseling sessions for this track that he learned about the Fort Bragg Commercial Truck Driver Course.

Johnston Community College Truck Training Division faculty teach the eight-week program, which provides classroom and hands-on instruction, on Fort Bragg. The program is offered to Soldiers through a federal grant administered by The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration in partnership with the North Carolina Division of Motor

Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson, assigned to the 10th Military Police Battalion (CID), 3rd Military Police Group (CID), Fort Bragg, North Carolina, stands beside a trailer that belongs to one of the trucks used during the Fort Bragg Commercial Truck Driver Course. Wilson recently graduated from the course as part of the Fort Bragg Transition University. (Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson)



Vehicles, which offers courses at reduced rates for prospective students.

While Wilson feels his background in maintenance will provide him with several opportunities after the Army, he did not want to let the opportunity to obtain an additional skill pass him by.

"I have done maintenance for 23 years. I kind of wanted to challenge myself, to see what else I can do," Wilson said. "The uncertainty of the economy was the thing that motivated me to participate in the truck driving class. I want to be able to sustain my current lifestyle once I get out of the Army. You cannot take anything for granted."

"I feel at peace about transitioning outside of the military because of this new skill set. Although I have the maintenance background, I now have a skill set that is in high demand, so I am even more confident in my ability to provide for my family."

— Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson



Then-Spc. Frederick Wilson is pictured in this 1995 photo, while attending the Primary Leadership Development Course at the NCO Academy in Grafenwoehr, Germany. (Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson)

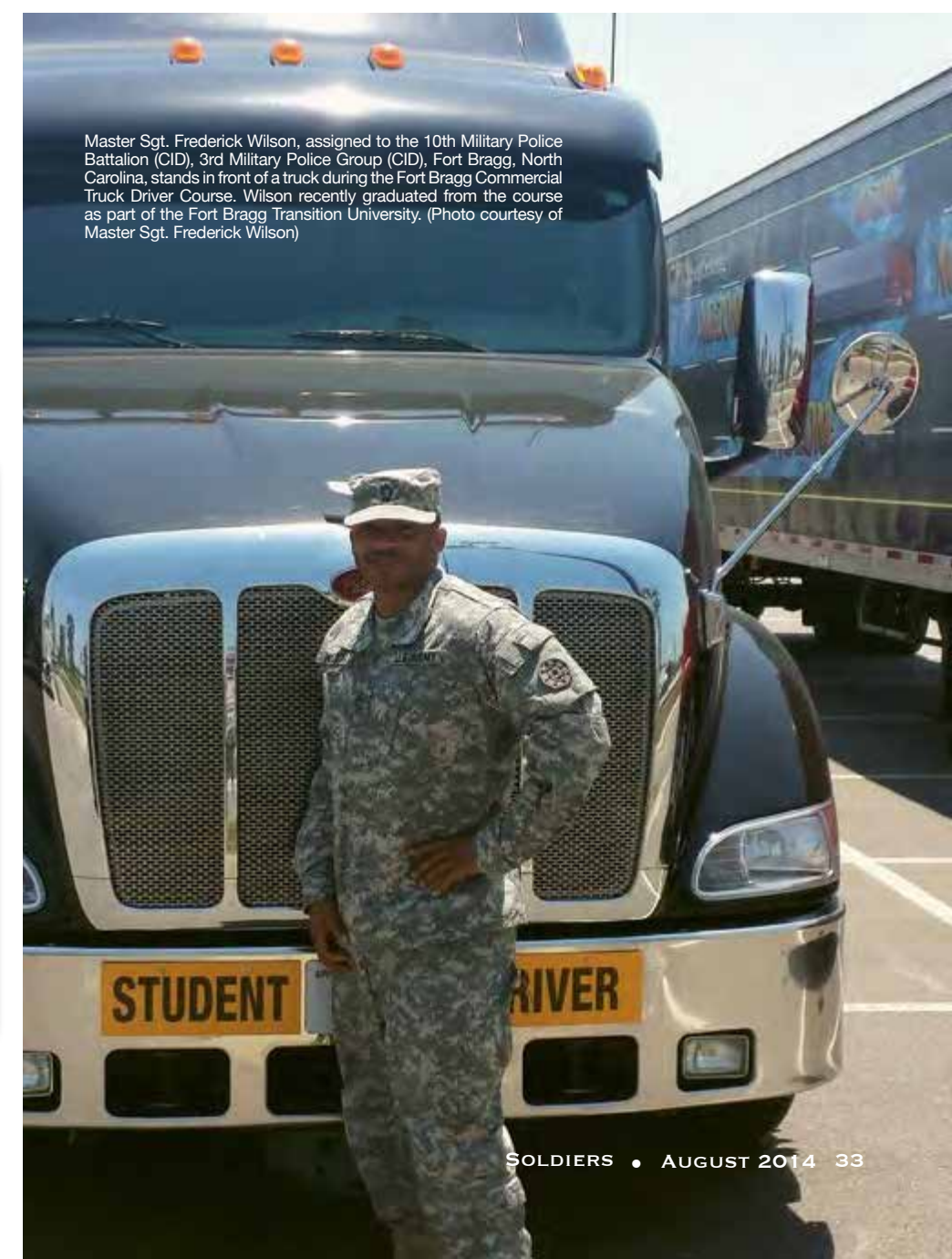
The truck-driving program taught him a different type of confidence in terms of accepting new and unfamiliar challenges, he said, but most importantly, it gave him another means to provide for his family once his military career ends.

Wilson said he is grateful for the opportunity to have attended the truck driver course. To him, this and similar opportunities provided to transitioning Soldiers are great gestures by the Army to thank Soldiers for their service. They amount to tangible tokens of appreciation that mere words can't provide.

"A lot of times people say the words, 'Thanks for your service,' and that is great.

We need that, but we need programs like this even more," he said. "To me, this is putting your money where your mouth is. When the government reinvests in the Soldier (that) is the best way to say thank you to a Soldier that is transitioning out. When you give them true opportunities like this, you teach them a skill that automatically transfers to a civilian career.

"I feel well prepared and I have a lot of options out there because of my experience. ... I have used the training that was afforded to me and I also have the option of the G.I. Bill to go back to school and further my education as well." **sm**



Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson, assigned to the 10th Military Police Battalion (CID), 3rd Military Police Group (CID), Fort Bragg, North Carolina, stands in front of a truck during the Fort Bragg Commercial Truck Driver Course. Wilson recently graduated from the course as part of the Fort Bragg Transition University. (Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Frederick Wilson)

Army Career and Alumni Program (now Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program) counselor Jaquetta Bowden shows Spc. Tony Coronado, Company B, 100th Brigade Support Battalion, where to list his job preferences on the online registration form during a hiring event at Fort Sill, Oklahoma's Truman Education Center. The program is increasing efforts to help Soldiers who are leaving the Army find jobs by pairing them with companies and agencies that are looking to hire new employees. (Photo by Ben Sherman)



Reintegrate Strong: Preparing Soldiers for life after the Army

Story by David Vergun, Army News Service

TRANSITIONING to civilian life might seem a bit frightening to a Soldier who is preparing to separate from the Army.

But it's nothing to sweat about, "as long as you're adequately prepared," said Curtis Coy, deputy under secretary for economic opportunity at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Soldiers are pretty adept and resourceful in terms of taking on new challenges and responsibilities," said Coy. And, he added, "I'd argue that Soldiers are capable of doing that exact same thing in their job search."

The Soldier for Life program advocates a career lifecycle that will help Soldiers transition into civilian life. That transition, known as Reintegrate Strong, uses programs designed to ensure Soldiers land

softly in non-military life.

Coy pointed out that in April, veteran unemployment was about 6 percent, nearly a percentage point below the national average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Of those unemployed veterans, just 3 percent were between 18 and 24 years old. And of that 3 percent not in the labor force, about 30 percent were attending college or vocational training.

One reason for that is the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011, which set aside significant resources for the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program, which helps service members with resumes and provides job-hunting assistance.

Another program, the Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program (formerly

Army Career and Alumni Program), "is TAP on steroids," said Walter Herd, the program's director.

He explained that the Army started out using TAP, and then about three years ago began adding a lot more to it, making it the "best career transition program in the military" today.

That re-engineering of the Army's transition assistance program was the result of "a detailed analysis and a lot of surveys and interviews with Soldiers," said Herd.

The number of transition assistance counselors has tripled over the last couple of years, totaling about 700 at 75 locations on installations, as well as centers used by the Guard and Reserve. "Their sole task is to help Soldiers reach their career-readiness standards," Herd said.



Sgt. Maj. Wayne Bowser Sr., the senior enlisted adviser for Family and Employer Programs and Policy in the Pentagon's Office of Reserve Affairs, discusses resources available to transitioning Soldiers at a Hero 2 Hired Mobile Job Store in Washington, D.C., Oct. 23, 2013. (Photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

Additional counselors can also be found online. Soldiers and their spouses can visit the site at <https://www.acap.army.mil> or call toll-free 1-800-325-4715 to speak with a qualified counselor, 24/7.

Every month about 2,000 Soldiers log into the site to work on their individualized transition plans, and more Soldiers are visiting the site every month. No other service offers a comparable virtual transi-

tion assistance website, Herd said.

Herd also encourages Soldiers to visit the brick and mortar Soldier for Life centers located on every post.

Start early

After speaking with thousands of Soldiers who've made the transition, as well as representatives from industry, Herd concluded that the most important thing a Soldier can do is to start the transition process early — at least 12 to 18 months before separation — and get to work on preparing for civilian life.

To help Soldiers prepare for their transition, the VA offers a one-day seminar on important services like home loans, the Post-9/11 GI Bill, medical coverage and even death benefits.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill "is an incredible benefit Congress bestowed to the military," said Coy, who believes lawmakers will allow the benefit to continue, unlike the Vietnam-era GI Bill, which ended shortly after the war.

The bill provides a wide range of options, he said. Soldiers can choose between attending a two-year community college, a university or a vocational-technical school. Additionally, the bill can cover costs for things like testing, licensure and certification for jobs with those requirements, as well as apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

"The bill is probably the biggest toolbox that anyone in this country has," he said.

Another VA-sponsored benefit is enrollment on the eBenefits site, which is required for every transitioning service member. Soldiers who visit the site can track all of their VA benefits and get assistance for such things as home loans and employment.

On the site, users can also get help translating their military skills into language appropriate for civilian resumes. Once that is done, they can make their resumes available to employers via the site.

Soldiers also get a three-day Department of Labor-led workshop, Herd said. Representatives from state employment services and DOL contractors teach Soldiers the best way to conduct job searches, career decision-making, interviewing techniques, and resume and cover letter preparation.



A Soldier attending the 2014 Mission Solutions Summit of the Army Aviation Association of America in Nashville, Tennessee, expresses interest in attending Trident University, at one of many education booths set up at the summit. (Photo by David Vergun)

Soldiers are also provided with an evaluation of their employability relative to the job market.

Those with service-connected disabilities are offered the Disabled Transition Assistance Program, with customized job-search assistance.

Another benefit the DOL extends to Soldiers, Herd said, is the “Gold Card.” This card allows veterans to go to the front of the line in some 3,000 DOL employment centers across the country. Counselors at these centers assist veterans with such things as employer referrals, locating apprenticeship positions and career guidance. A case manager is assigned to every Soldier for follow-up assistance.

An important part of the transition process for both the Soldier and spouse is being able to do a budget, Herd said. Representatives from Army Emergency Relief or local financial institutions help Soldiers draft personalized budgets.

Soldiers who’d like to open their own businesses can also get help from the U.S. Small Business Administration, Herd said.

They get assistance with business planning and entrepreneurial development services, and learn about veteran benefits such as getting certified as a veteran-owned or service-disabled, veteran-owned business.

The Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program provides counselors to help Soldiers match their military occupational specialties with jobs in the civilian world, and assist with training and certification requirements, said Sgt. Maj. Shane Chapman, the program’s senior enlisted advisor.

The program helps Soldiers with real-world career skills, such as learning to be relaxed in a job interview. It also teaches Soldiers to lose the military jargon on a resume, and present their military skills in terms that will appeal to civilian employers, said Chapman.

The Soldier for Life program collaborates with a number of entities, including states, cities, universities, non-profits, local veterans groups and businesses.

“A lot of times these organizations want to help veterans, but they don’t know where to find the veterans, and the veter-

ans don’t know where to get help ... they are overwhelmed because there is so much out there,” Chapman said.

Soldier for Life provides points of contact where veterans can turn for information on education and career opportunities, fitness and health, family services, mental health services, suicide prevention, post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

While many of the programs offered by the Army, VA and DOD overlap in the types of support they offer, it all adds up to having a lot of tools in the transition toolbox, Herd said. Getting to know what assistance is available takes time, and that’s another reason to begin the transition process early.

One of the Army’s top priorities in the last several years has been ensuring Soldiers are connected with the right transition resources, Herd said, and Soldier for Life TAP is continuing to expand its services to reflect that.

The Army will soon spread its transition tasks out even further across the mili-

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Soldiers attend a transition event, Nov. 21, 2013, in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Professionals at the event track Soldiers’ progress in reaching out to colleges or potential employers. (Photo by Maureen Rose)



A couple of years ago, Soldiers were not getting what they needed to get done early enough and leaders were not adequately supporting Soldiers in the transitioning process, Herd explained, adding that there have been a lot of changes on both fronts, but there’s still room for improvement.

Coy said Soldiers need to go about transitioning the same way they would prepare for a mission. That means researching potential employers and ensuring their resumes reflect the kinds of things that are important to companies that are looking to hire. “Soldiers are very adept at being able to do just that,” he added.

However, “the challenge for Soldiers is they’re all about the team concept,” Coy pointed out. “They have a very difficult time, because it’s embedded in the culture that you don’t take individual credit, you credit the squad or the platoon.

“Now, you’re thrust into the situation where Soldiers are sitting in front of a perspective employer and are to sell themselves on a personal level, not their unit, not their mission,” he continued. “Sometimes that’s difficult. But it’s nothing that they can’t overcome, like they’ve overcome obstacles in the past in their military careers.”

Hurdling those obstacles requires a lot of research and practice, Coy said. “Recon the company, practice interviews, get down your elevator speech in terms of why I should hire you over someone else. Figure out what attributes you bring to the table that someone else doesn’t have. Once you get that down, the interview becomes easier.”

Coy said he tells employers not just to hire veterans “because it’s a good thing to do or the right thing to do, or it makes you feel good.” Instead, hire veterans because it makes “incredibly good business sense.”

Once employers see the value of a veteran, from the standpoint of their leadership, hard work, teamwork, resiliency, ability to work in a very diverse environment, they will see the wisdom of this, he said, adding “I haven’t yet found a single employer that didn’t come back and want more of that.” **sm**



Soldiers and veterans browse various businesses, colleges and nonprofit organization booths at a hiring event, Oct. 25, 2103, at Fort Sill, Oklahoma’s Truman Education Center. (Photo by James Brabeneć)

MY RESOURCES

Soldier for Life TAP
<http://www.acap.army.mil/default.aspx>

Soldier For Life
<http://www.army.mil/soldierforlife/>

eBenefits
<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>

Post-9/11 GI Bill
<http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911-gibill.asp>

DOL help for vets
http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/tap_fs.htm

Small Business Administration help
<http://www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness>

Hero2Hired
<https://h2h.jobs/>

Post-9/11 GI Bill comparison tool
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/04/14/estimate-your-education-costs-just-few-clicks-gi-bill-comparison-tool>

Transitioning out of the Army, still Soldiers for Life



Story by J.D. Leipold, Army News Service

FOR Spc. CarmellaRyen Macababbad, life has been a series of transitions.

Born in California to a Filipino father and an American mother, her family headed back to the Philippines when she was a baby. When she was 7, they returned to the U.S., settling in the Seattle area.

In 1992, another transition of Macababbad's young life took place, but the decision wasn't hers. For reasons she wished to keep private, the state's Child Protective Services showed up at her home, and she and her brother and sister became wards of the state. Macababbad was 8.

The state tried to find suitable foster parents or a group home.

"It can be very difficult because, well because some people just shouldn't be parents ... but it's better than being homeless," she said, adding that by the time she was 14 she had been through eight or nine foster and group homes.

Some were abusive placements; others were just not the right fit.

"I was just a troubled, ornery child ... there were definitely issues with adjusting when I was younger ... going back and forth, (and asking) who loves me, who really cares about me exactly?" said Macababbad. "I did have a good relationship with my foster mother, after I stopped being a butt."

"By the time I was 16, I got into a bit of trouble and my foster mom was very disappointed in me. That disappointment from someone who I loved ... scared me straight." That same year, her foster mom died. "I really cleaned up my act and just tried to be the best I could be for her and in memory of her. All she had asked of me was that I always try my best."

After her foster mother's passing, she stayed with her foster grandmother, who she grew very close to, until she was 18.

No longer a ward of the state, Macababbad decided to give college a try. Through the assistance of multiple

organizations, she was able to secure school loans and make the transition from foster care to adulthood.

At 22, she had an associate degree with bills to pay and no real direction. Military service was a solid option.

"The best way to describe it, I guess, was I just felt a little bit lost, and I really just didn't have a lot of guidance," she recalled. "I read about the Air Force and the Marines and Navy ... in the end, I felt the Army was a good fit for me and would help me become a stronger individual."

She signed for six years and on June 28, 2006, Macababbad shipped out for 10 weeks of basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to begin her transition from civilian to Soldier. From day one, Macababbad never questioned her decision to enlist.

"Joining the Army was the best decision I've ever made in my life — I had student loans and bad savings habits," she said. "But the Army gave me the discipline I needed as soon as the bus rolled onto the

fort. That discipline ... started right then and there at basic."

Following basic training, she attended the Intelligence Electronic Warfare Maintainer School at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where she earned the military occupational specialty 35T: military intelligence equipment systems maintainer and integrator.

"My MOS encompasses just about every piece of equipment you can think of when it comes to electrical equipment," she said. "I fix generators, routers, modems, satellite communications systems, transceivers and computers. I'm working on a PlayStation because during deployment your downtime is filled with the gym and your game console — so PlayStations and Xboxes are really important to keep in working order."

In 2012, she tacked on two years to her contract and re-enlisted for a school option, but explained with all the pre-deployment training she felt there just wasn't enough time to go to school and train for the next deployment. She did receive \$8,000 for resigning, which she says was actually a surprise.

After two deployments under her belt — 10 months in Iraq and nine months in Afghanistan — and her enlistment winding down, Macababbad made the decision to take the leap and re-enter the civilian world.

She checked out the Transition Services Program at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, to see how her MOS would translate to the private sector. She also sought information about how to write a resume and market herself, how to take tests and how to interview.

Through state, federal, private and public partners including non-profits, the base offers apprenticeship programs in the trades, such as Veterans in Piping which conducts an 18-week, full-time accelerated training program and entry into five-year paid apprenticeship programs in welding, plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration. There are accelerated training programs that offer direct entry into paid electrician, painter and truck driver apprenticeships as well.

"The apprenticeship programs are amazing and prove we can be contributing members of society instead of part of that statistic of homeless veterans,

jobless veterans," Macababbad said. "With this drawdown, a huge force of service members are getting out and ... flooding the job market, and that means we'll be competing."

For Macababbad, the program that stood out was the 16-week computer-programming course at the Microsoft Software & Systems Academy. Macababbad, who just completed the course, said if you had told her a few years ago that she'd be writing code and developing a mobile app for tablets — skills she learned in the program — she wouldn't have believed you.

"It's pretty exciting for me and will be published in the Windows App store in a couple of weeks," she says. "It's a password generator. In the military, we always have to change passwords, get different combinations, so that's what my app is going to do, figure out a password and save it for you."

Macababbad says the eight years of experience she's had as a Soldier have helped prepare her for reintegration into the civilian sector, and all that she's learned in the Army will remain with her for life. Now 29, she has already landed a job with Microsoft, and plans to continue serving as a Soldier in the Army Reserve.

"As service members we have a unique experience that really develops us and our skills a lot faster than our civilian counterparts," she said. "Things like leadership

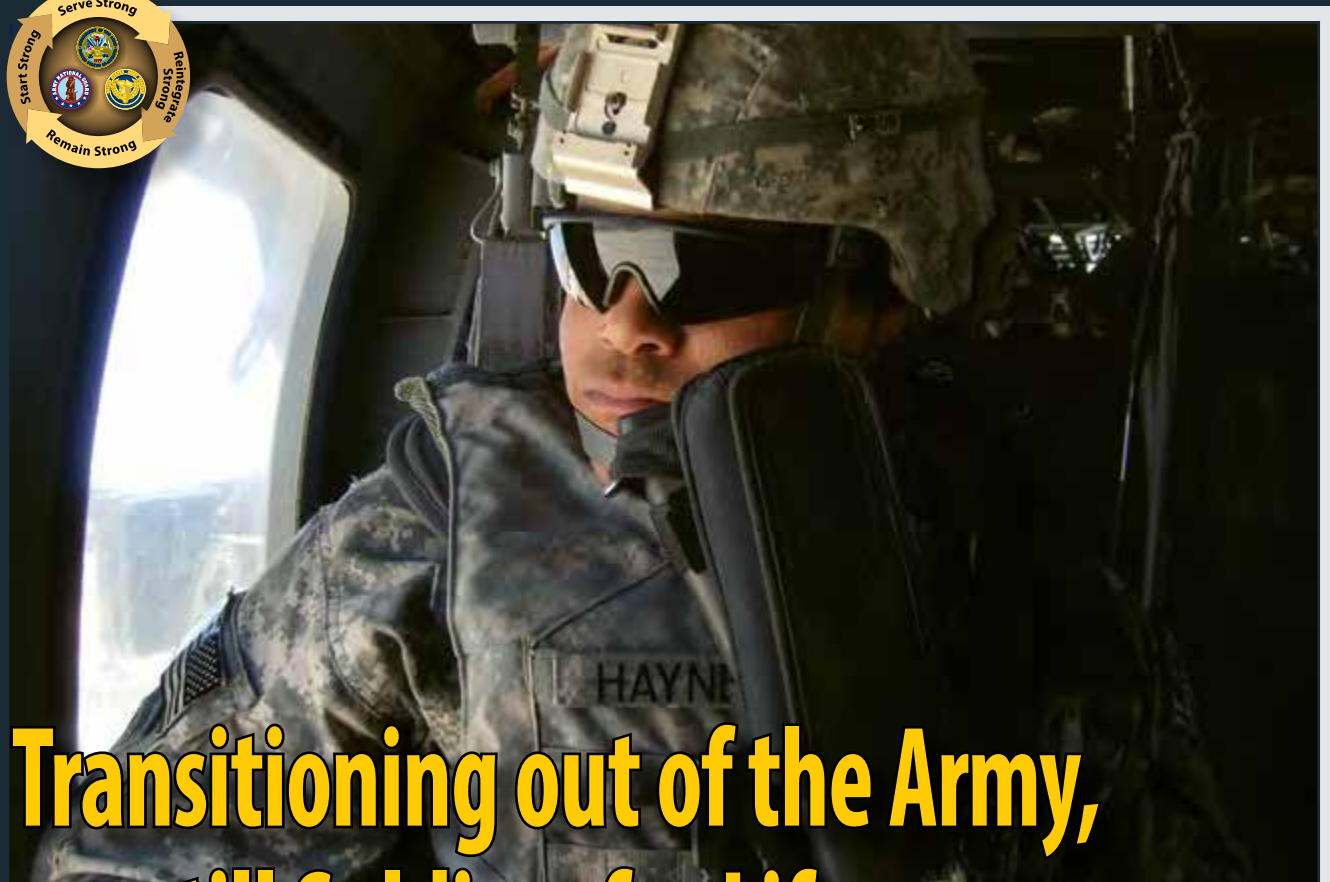
"Joining the Army was the best decision I've ever made in my life."



and cohesion, discipline, time management — those are things we started learning from the very first day, the very second we stepped off that bus and started to become Soldiers."

Spc. CarmellaRyen Macababbad served a 10-month tour in Iraq and another nine months in Afghanistan. When she decided to leave active duty after eight years of service, she checked out the Transition Services Program at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, and qualified for the 16-week Microsoft Software and Systems Academy. Today, she works for Microsoft and serves in the Army Reserve. (Photo courtesy of CarmellaRyen Macababbad)





Transitioning out of the Army, still Soldiers for Life (continued)

A Soldier readies for retirement

On the other side of the country at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Sgt. 1st Class Alexander F. Haynes Sr. has another 12 months before he retires with 20 years of service and transitions with his wife and four children to civilian life.

From birth to around age 14, Haynes lived in Brooklyn, New York, with his younger brother and mom. While his father, a retired police officer, lived in Atlanta, Haynes said he never felt he was from a single-parent family, because his father was always involved in his life.

“Even though my father was in Georgia, he had a long arm you could say — he wasn’t there physically, but when he could be, and if he had to be, he would be,” he said.

“A lot of people base New York on what they see on TV ... don’t get me wrong, there’s violence everywhere. How-

ever, my family just made sure my brother and I weren’t exposed to that,” he recalled. “We were ‘latch-key kids.’ I did grow up fast, because you did a lot on your own. My mother would still be at work, so I did after-school programs and was pretty much responsible for myself at a young age, riding public transportation, come straight home, lock and bolt the door, eat a snack and watch TV. Only when my mother came home could I go outside.”

At 14, Haynes’ mother, who got along well with his father, thought it would be better for her son to attend high school in Atlanta, so she sent him to live with his father. The thing he said he liked best in high school was the Junior ROTC, which was affiliated with the Navy.

While his transition from Brooklyn to Atlanta went well, his transition from high school to college did not. He spent 18 months at Georgia Southern University and only earned six credit hours.

“I just wasn’t ready for school,” he said. “As a matter of fact, I had joined the Army and my family didn’t even know. I just knew I had to do something constructive, because there was no way in the world I was going to tell my father I didn’t have a plan.”

Haynes’ father was an Army veteran of Vietnam; his grandfather had also been in the Army and his other grandfather had served in the Air Force. His father had no problem with his son enlisting. So at age 19, he shipped out to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, for basic training, and then to advanced individual training at Fort Lee, Virginia.

Haynes had jumped at the first opportunity his recruiter offered: 92L, a petroleum laboratory specialist, working in a lab testing the quality of fuel used in Army vehicles.

Over the last 19 years, he has been stationed at Hunter Army Airfield in

When he was deployed to Afghanistan in 2011, Sgt. 1st Class Alexander F. Haynes’ job was to assess fuel quality and spillages around the country. Although he’ll miss the Army when he retires in June 2015, he said it will always be ingrained within him, and that he will be a Soldier for Life. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Alexander F. Haynes)

Savannah, Georgia; on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt; Fort Drum, New York; Germany; Fort Irwin, California; Fort Lee, Virginia; and finally his twilight tour at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. He also has deployed to Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan.

As a senior noncommissioned officer, Haynes has been responsible for training his Soldiers, serving as an instructor for the advanced leadership and senior leadership courses, as well as MOS-specific classes.

“I’ve noticed the Army was changing. That’s not to say we’re changing for the worse or for the better, we’re just changing in about every way,” he said. “My boys are getting older and I didn’t want to risk their education by continuing to move around, so I started ACAP (Army Career and Alumni Program, now Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program) classes even though I’m about 15 months out from my retirement.”

Haynes said he’d heard about the program, but never got involved with it so he has since been taking workshops in preparing resumes and learning about different veterans benefits. He’s even taken an entrepreneurship class offered by Soldier for Life TAP, and become a certified public speaker through Toastmasters. He’s looking into job fairs and exploring the virtual classes available. After Haynes is set up in an oil refinery job, he plans to become a certified personal trainer and start a side business.

“This isn’t retirement, this is going to be a transition,” he said. “The bills still come in, kids still have to go to school and I’ve got to take care of my family, so I’m looking at all my skills as a leader and the education I’ve had in the Army, and working to translate those skills into the civilian sector.

“The kind of leadership I’ve learned over the last 19 years you can’t get anywhere else. You can be put into any position on any given day and you’re expected to adapt and get the mission done,” he said. “An NCO’s job is to get the mission done.

“For instance, just moving 200 people



Sgt. 1st Class Alexander F. Haynes receives a certificate from Toastmasters International in April 2014, recognizing him as a first-level competent communicator. Haynes has added the certification to his resume to make him more competitive in the civilian job market when he retires. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Alexander F. Haynes)

(Below) Left to right: Sgt. 1st Class Alexander F. Haynes, his wife, Tanya, and his children Tekari, AJ and Jada, attend a University of Pittsburgh vs. U.S. Naval Academy football game in Annapolis, Maryland. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Alexander F. Haynes)

— you might be an NCO in charge of a rifle range who is responsible for qualifying all these Soldiers — everybody gets qualified, everybody went home, nobody got injured,” he said. “That’s a big deal in the civilian world because (of) the logistics involved in doing that we take for granted in the Army.”

Haynes said there are many things he’ll miss about the Army — the structure, not having to worry about what to wear, the camaraderie — but there’s nothing he’ll miss more than his fellow Soldiers.

“There’s no place in the world you’re going to be able to interact with an individual on a day-to-day basis and have that kind of impact on somebody else’s life,” he said. “The most rewarding part has been when I see a Soldier I knew five or six years ago who had issues as a private, but is now a staff sergeant who overcame their obstacles and got promoted.” **sm**





Soldiers 'Remain Strong' as civilians



Story by Lisa Ferdinando, Army News Service

RETIRED Master Sgt. Annie Mickle inspected Soldiers, dressed in their best civilian business attire, in the front of a classroom at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

"Very nice, very nice," she said. One by one, Mickle gave feedback to the women, as the men, who already took their turns, observed.

"Look at that green; look at the earrings. Very complimentary," she said.

"She's trendy, she's in fashion. You want that. Don't come to a job interview with a double-breasted polyester suit. You're not in style," she said, to the chuckles of attendees.

Mickle, who retired from the Army in 2003, is now a government contractor who leads a Department of Labor work-

shop for transitioning service members.

Once a student in the class, she is now the teacher.

A cancer survivor and an active community volunteer, Mickle said she has found success in her endeavors in the civilian world by applying the know-how gained from the Army.

She said she carried the military ethos with her all her life. The Army reinforced those core values and provided training in human resources and management.

A former Army recruiter, she said she learned public speaking and effective teaching techniques as a Soldier.

"All of those skills that I learned in the military now I'm using in my civilian life, because they trained me to be an instruc-

tor in the military. Now in the civilian life, I am an instructor," she said.

Veterans possess innumerable skills and can leverage all the knowledge acquired in the military to be productive and successful members of society, she said.

Mickle's students, armed with new career advice, had the added bonus of interacting with employers at a recent job fair at Fort Belvoir. For the Soldiers nearing their transitions back to civilian life the message was clear: Employers want to hire veterans.

Those who have worn the uniform embody the best traits and are ideal employees, said Vernita Pryor-Holifield, a retired Soldier and head of Fort Belvoir's

Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program (formerly the Army Career and Alumni Program). Veterans boast years of specialized experience, she said, and carry with them the values reinforced in them from the military: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage.

"I've seen many great success stories," she said. "Wearing the uniform helped them to get those great values."

Pryor-Holifield wore the uniform for two decades, before retiring in 1995. She has worked as a civilian in every job in the Army's transition program since then. Now the transition services manager, she assists area veterans and transitioning Soldiers.

The traits that make great Soldiers are the same traits that make great employees and productive members of a community, she said.

Veterans remain Army strong and are the bedrock of communities throughout the United States, Pryor-Holifield said, adding that those have served say their military experience has directly contributed to their successful transition.

"Wherever you go and whatever you do, you run into someone who is a veteran. It's just fantastic to know," she said.

Soldiers who separate from the Army have 180 days after they leave the service to use Soldier for Life TAP services. Retirees, however, can use the program for life, and can go to Soldier for Life centers wherever they plan to relocate and use the services as often as they want, Pryor-Holifield said.

Services offered include workshops on employment, financial planning and benefits, and career days, job fairs and networking events, to name a few. Veterans can learn more online anytime at <https://www.acap.army.mil>.

Veterans' benefits

The Soldier for Life program stresses, just as its name suggests, that Soldiers are members of the Army family for life, not just while they are in the military, said the top noncommissioned officer of the program, Sgt. Maj. Shane Chapman.

The program provides resources to guide veterans through the benefits



process, education and career opportunities, post-Army fitness and health, family services and mental health services.

Soldier for Life connects veterans with the programs needed to help them stay Army strong after they leave the service, whether they served one tour or retired after a full career, Chapman said.

It also helps them find help for the challenges they may face, he said.

The program has information on where veterans can turn for support with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, homelessness, substance abuse and addiction, or if they are at risk for suicide.

The Department of Veterans Affairs eBenefits website (www.eBenefits.va.gov) is a great resource where veterans can apply for benefits, view their status, access documents, browse a national resource directory and visit an online employment center. The VA also offers education and training, mental health resources, health care, home loans and career and job training.

Additional federal resources include the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, or VETS, at www.dol.gov/vets/programs.

While on the VETS site, veterans can

(Above) Retired Master Sgt. Annie Mickle helps Army doctor Col. Arthur C. Wittich with his resume, during a workshop for transitioning service members at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, April 24, 2014. Mickle gives personalized attention to members to help them with the skills needed to stay Army strong long after they leave the service. (Photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

(Left) Retired Master Sgt. Annie Mickle, who retired from the Army in 2003, uses the skills she learned in the military to stay Army strong. Here, Mickle poses at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, after leading a workshop for transitioning service members. (Photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

The Soldier for Life program stresses, just as its name suggests, that Soldiers are members of the Army family for life, not just while they are in the military.



SOLDIER FOR LIFE



Retired Master Sgt. Annie Mickie speaks with Army doctor Col. Arthur C. Wittich (left), and the Defense Commissary Agency's Command Sgt. Maj. John M. Gaines Jr., during a workshop for transitioning service members at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, April 24, 2014. Mickie gives personalized attention to members as they move on to civilian life with the valuable skills they gained in the Army, keeping them Army strong long after they leave the service. (Photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

H2H

peruse information about employment services, job rights, vocational programs and other initiatives.

The Feds Hire Vets site is the Office of Personnel Management's site for employment information for veterans and transitioning military, found at www.fedshirevets.gov.

The Department of Defense's Hero-2Hired site, h2h.jobs, has a wealth of information and job listings to help veterans, service members and their families find employment, said Sandra Williams, program analyst with the Employment Initiative Program, which unveiled H2H in 2011.

The Hero2Hired site offers virtual and live hiring events, networking opportunities and advice on creating an effective resume and acing the job interview, she said.

H2H has a truck — a "mobile job store" — that travels the country, visiting military bases and other locations to bring the online resources to the fingertips of job seekers. H2H also offers a resume builder that "translates" military jargon into civilian-speak, she said.

Employers readily seek out members of the military, said Williams, herself an Army Reservist who knows the value that veterans bring to the table.

Ryan Gallucci, the deputy director of national veterans service for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said the VFW offers a variety of assistance and benefits for eligible veterans, such as scholarships, emergency financial aid and help with applying for VA benefits.

Veterans have a "mission-centric attitude, discipline, punctuality and professionalism," he said, as he listed off the many desirable qualities of those who have served the nation.

The public's attitude toward veterans is "overwhelmingly positive" and employers understand the benefits in bringing someone aboard with military experience, he added.

The military teaches collaboration and working together for a common result, Gallucci, who served eight years in the Army Reserve, including a year in Iraq, explained.

"We might not see eye to eye on everything, but we're going to work together and we're going to protect each other and we're going to get the job done," he said. "I think it's a value that veterans can bring to the civilian workforce and something that any company would certainly want in their people."

Military standards demand individuals be physically fit, healthy and drug free. Members of the military work well under pressure, advance their skills, train and acquire new skills throughout their careers, she said.

"All of us have been touched by the conflicts," Williams said, referring to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, "so you learn to work facing a lot of deadlines, learn to work under pressure, and these are just skills that the American public has really been looking for."

Curtis Coy, deputy under secretary for economic opportunity at the Department of Veterans Affairs, agreed. He tells employers to hire veterans because it makes good business sense. Once employers see the value of a veteran — from the standpoint of leadership, diligence, dedication, teamwork, resiliency and ability to work in a very diverse environment — they will see the wisdom of it.

He added, "I haven't yet found a single employer that didn't come back and want more of that."

In addition to programs in the federal government, there are also a host of programs for veterans through state and local governments, businesses and other private groups, as well as military and veterans service organizations.

Live strong

Jacqueline Thomas, a retired Soldier now with the Secret Service, was at the career event ready to speak with veterans.

Thomas, at one of the most popular stops at the job fair, took time to review job seekers' resumes and give pointers on landing that federal position.

Veterans are among the best applicants, said Thomas, who started in the Army as an E-1 and retired in 2007 as a captain. They are hardworking, intelligent and educated, she said, noting that the education doesn't necessarily have to be from college.

"The work experience that they bring to the table is extremely valuable," she said.

Eligible veterans can get a hiring preference for federal jobs, but they still have to tailor their resumes to ensure they get on the certification list, Thomas said.

"I feel that anybody who has served their country and made the sacrifices that we have deserves to have some assistance," she said. "They need a leg up. We owe it to them."

With her resume in hand, veteran Josephine Clement waited patiently in line to see Thomas. Clement served three years

in the Army; her husband was a career Soldier.

Even though she left the service in 1999, she said she has carried the skills she learned in the Army throughout her life. She and her husband have instilled the Army values in their college-age son as well.

"I would recommend anyone who wants discipline in their life to join the military. You would get a whole lot of discipline, you would get structure in your life, and learn how to be a leader and serve your community," she said.

The Soldier for Life program underscores that veterans are important members of their communities and make great ambassadors for the next generation of Soldiers.

They are critical components in maintaining the all-volunteer force, the program notes.

After veterans gain all this unique training and years of experience, they are the embodiment of

Retired Army Capt. Jacqueline Thomas (right) gives Army veteran Josephine Clement advice for applying for a federal job at a job fair at Fort Belvoir, Virginia., April 24, 2014. Thomas, who is now with the U.S. Secret Service, retired from the Army in 2007 and now works to help veterans with the federal employment process. (Photo by Lisa Ferdinando)



Resources for veterans

eBenefits
<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>

Hero 2 Hired
<https://h2h.jobs>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
<http://www.va.gov>

Veterans' Employment and Training Services-U.S. Department of Labor
<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs>

Feds Hire Vets
<http://www.fedshirevets.gov>

Veterans Services-Office of Personnel Management
<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/veterans-services/>

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

VETS



SOLDIERS

Live



FACEBOOK



YOUTUBE



TWITTER



SOLDIERS LIVE



Former Army Capt. Jeff Amato and Aaron Sane work a trade show where they are promoting biological products designed for commercial agriculture. Amato and Sane are co-owners of Applied and Experimental Microbiology which they started in 2003 with a third partner, Tom Selvig (not pictured). (Photo courtesy of Jeff Amato)

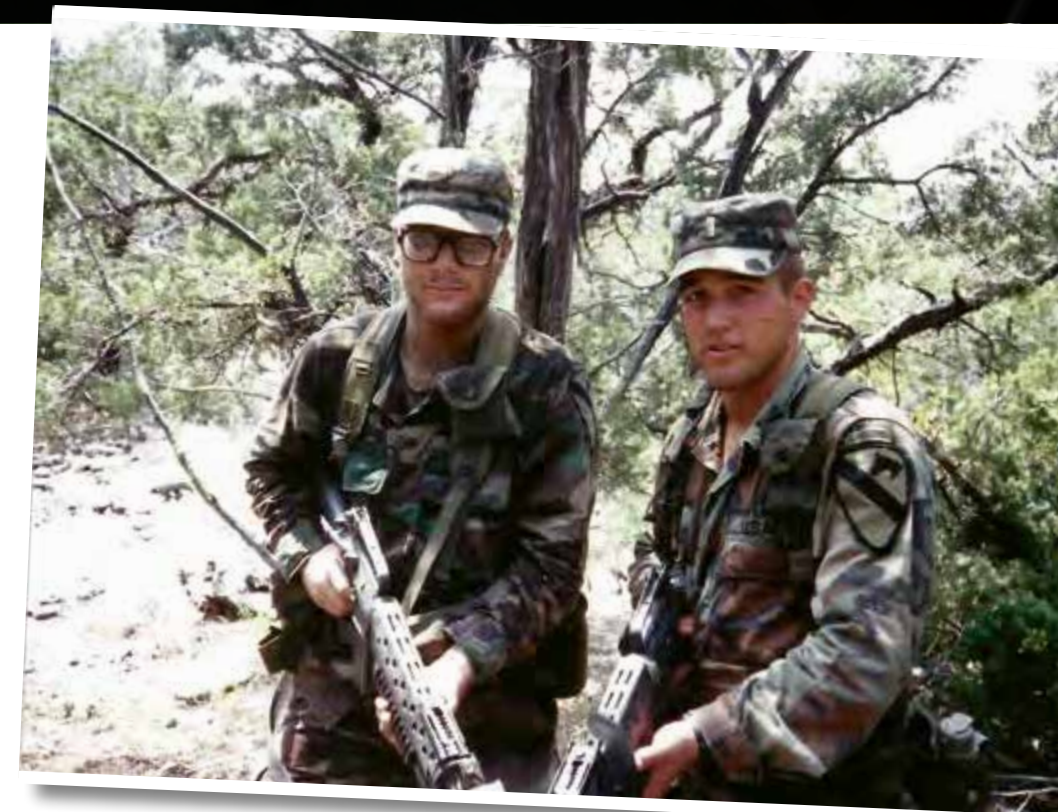
Story by Jacqueline M. Hames, Soldiers

SOLDIERS who have transitioned out of the Army, either through separation or retirement, enter the Remain Strong phase of the Soldier lifecycle, according to the Soldier for Life program. It's where Army alumni become mentors for Soldiers, new and old, and use the skills and values they learned in the Army as civilians.

Leaving military service can be a daunting task — the initial transition is hard enough, but growing used to civilian life can be a challenge all on its own.

"What I warn folks of is that it is hard out here in the civilian side when you don't have the backup of a regular paycheck (and) health care," Jeff Amato, president of Applied and Experimental Microbiology, said.

"It's like getting dropped off at a checkpoint. It's you and two other people and it's like 'Man, we're out here on our own,'" he added. "But if Soldiers remem-



Then-2nd Lt. Jeffrey Amato poses with a fellow Soldier while conducting dismounted reconnaissance training at Fort Hood, Texas, in 1995. (Photo courtesy of Jeff Amato)



Then-2nd Lt. Jeff Amato poses with friends at Fort Hood, Texas, in 1995. (Photo courtesy of Jeff Amato)

ber and adapt their military training, they can succeed in any business environment.”

Amato’s father and grandfather were in the Army, and Amato decided to follow in their footsteps. In 1994 he was commissioned out of the University of Connecticut. He left the Army as a captain after six years of service to start his civilian career.

“As far as getting out of the Army, I kind of smelled the roses there for a little bit and moved around through some different opportunities, some out of curiosity, some out of necessity,” he said. Amato landed at a start-up telecommunications company, something he admits was a bit risky, financially. He worked there for about a year before the company’s funding dried up and he had to find another position.

Amato moved on to El Paso Energy, which at the time was a fortune 50 Company. “So, I went from a small start-up to a very established, well-known, prosperous company. I went from one extreme to another.” Although it was a great place to work, Amato decided after a year that he wanted to do something more entrepreneurial and took a job at a mid-sized computer company in Austin, Texas.

While he was working with the computer company, his military experience enabled him to have direct influence over some of the company’s policies. He said the things he learned as a cadet, like leadership, problem solving and discipline, made him stand out. Eventually, Amato started his own microbiology company, where he now serves as president. The

company manufactures biological products for commercial agriculture, or as Amato explained it, “probiotics for plants.”

Amato will speak with any veterans who ask about his experience in civilian business and try to give them as much advice as possible.

“I think it’s important that the generalized skills that we talked about, the leadership experience, the mission focus, the discipline, the organizational roles and responsibilities, and knowing how to make an organization function and have that team work, *esprit de corps*, is something (Soldiers) can bring to any company and especially into small business,” he said.

Army alumni bring valuable skills to the workforce and the communities they live in, but getting a civilian job or applying for college can be tricky. Sometimes, businesses and schools don’t understand what a Soldier’s military experience means or how it translates to the private sector or academic worlds.

“The Army gives you great training that does correlate to civilian careers, to the civilian workforce, but you have to know what the correlation is and often times you have to identify it yourself ... the Army knows what the Army taught you, but Microsoft doesn’t know how that applies to Microsoft,” Ryan Gallucci, deputy legislative director for Veterans of Foreign Wars, said.

Gallucci enlisted in the Army Reserve right out of high school in 1999, after a history of resisting his family’s military



legacy. He had a brother and grandfather in the Navy and a father in the Army, and admits he wouldn’t have succeeded in college without a better understanding of what service meant — an experience the Reserve gave him.

He deployed to Iraq in 2003, taking a leave of absence from his school, Rhode Island University. The registrar’s office told him he would be able to pick right back up where he left off once he returned from deployment, which was 15 months later.

“So I came back, wanted to enroll in summer classes, just get that going, get right back into something that would help with getting back to civilian life, getting back to normal, and I was told by the school that I was no longer a student there. That I had been disenrolled because my leave of absence went beyond 12 months,” Gallucci said. He re-enrolled and was accepted, but never felt his experience should have come to that.

“It turns out it was a classic case of ignorance in the purest form. The school had never had to deal with anything like

this in the past,” he explained. There had not been a Reserve mobilization of that magnitude, or for that length of time, since Vietnam, Gallucci added.

“They took corrective action and it no longer happens, but it was a major frustration and it made me wonder why is the community not ready to serve veterans?” he said.

In addition to this academic hurdle, Gallucci was experiencing trouble readjusting to civilian life. He went to the Department of Veterans Affairs on the recommendation of his father to get treatment, which is where he learned about



Then-Spc. Ryan Gallucci while serving in Iraq in 2003. (Photo by Ryan Moniz)

veterans’ advocacy, and gained a passion for helping transitioning service members and fellow veterans.

“I wanted to focus on making (the) transition better for service members, or even my fellow Reservists, to make their transition back to civilian life better,” he said. He believes he wouldn’t be in the position he is today without the support from the men and women he served with on a small civil affairs team.

“There was a major, a captain, a master sergeant and an E5, and I was one of two specialists on my direct support CA team, and we became very close,” he said. When they returned from Iraq, that didn’t change. His team chief looked out for him while he was in school and even introduced him to a public affairs office at the Naval War College, where Gallucci interned. He moved into a public affairs position in Washington, D.C., after his internship, and from there moved to veterans’ advocacy.

Gallucci, in his role as the VFW’s deputy legislative director, can now aid veterans at the highest levels, advocating for them in Congress and with federal agencies responsible for administering veterans’ benefits.

The VFW and Gallucci recently won a victory for GI Bill users with the Education for Veterans Act, which was signed into law in early 2013. The act, Gallucci

explained, directs the VA to create an off-the-shelf university comparison tool for veterans and commissions a feedback system where veterans could report fraud or abuse from institutions of higher learning.

Gallucci advises Soldiers making the transition into civilian life to be their own advocates and really know what they want to do in their new careers. Although business owners want to hire veterans, the veterans have to meet them halfway, he explained.

“You have to start planning well in advance, start researching companies you’d want to work for and if you need a college degree, figure out how to get there,” Gallucci said.

Soldiers should also remember to use their personal networks — the people they knew in the Army — as well as former military personnel already in the civilian workforce. “For me, it was a team chief who understood what I wanted to do, cared about me, cared about my well-being and helped guide me on a path that would help me get there,” he said.

Both Amato and Gallucci attribute some of their success to things they learned while in the Army, but their examples remind Soldiers to continually seek advice, as well as give it. The back and forth between the Army, veterans, businesses and communities is what helps Soldiers remain strong for life. **SM**

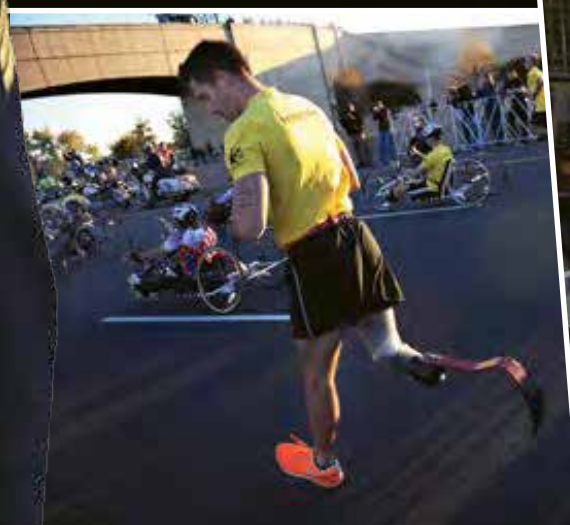
Ryan Gallucci participates in a press conference on veterans’ benefits outside the U.S. Capitol, March, 27, 2014. (Photo by Steven Jensen)





This is our Army

The strength of our nation is our Army. The strength of our Army is our Soldiers. The Strength of our Soldiers is our families — this is what makes us “Army strong!”



OUR ARMY LEADERSHIP



Secretary of the Army
The Honorable John M. McHugh



Chief of Staff of the Army
General Raymond T. Odierno



Under Secretary of the Army
The Honorable Brad R. Carson



Vice Chief of Staff of the Army
General John F. Campbell



Sergeant Major of the Army
SMA Raymond F. Chandler

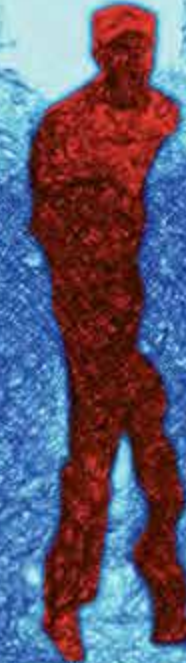
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Taken at face value?
It might not be worth much.



The Face of Indiscipline

He's new to his unit but fits right in. A hard, dedicated worker, he never complains when he has to hurry up and wait. He's the kind of guy everyone wants on the team. He's also a fitness buff. 300+ on the APFT, six-minute miler, committed to personal health and fitness, as well as the challenges of being a Soldier. He can't swim a stroke and no one knows it. He and his battle buddies are planning a canoeing outing when the weather gets a little warmer. Two hours into their eight-hour adventure they will encounter some rough water. When our non-swimmer's canoe flips in the rapids, he won't be wearing his personal floatation device.

Where is that commitment to his own wellbeing?

Discipline takes many forms, as does indiscipline. Know what's right and do what's right.



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